

CHIEF CURATOR W. H. OSGOOD RETURNS FROM EXPEDITION

Having completed his work in the region of the Straits of Magellan, including the island of Tierra del Fuego at the extreme southern tip of South America, Dr. Wilfred H.



Dr. Wilfred H. Osgood

Osgood, Chief Curator of the Department of Zoology, returned to the Museum just as this issue of FIELD MUSEUM NEWS was going to press. Dr. Osgood was leader of the Magellanic Expedition. Other members of this expedition who have returned are Mr. Karl P. Schmidt, Curator of Amphibians and Rep-

tiles, and Mr. John Schmidt, field assistant. Mr. Colin C. Sanborn, Curator of Mammals, is remaining in the field to continue work in certain parts of Argentina and Peru.

Dr. Osgood reports that the expedition was extremely successful, and has resulted in collections of several thousand specimens which will contribute to the expansion of knowledge about the faunas of southern Peru, central Chile, the coasts of the Straits of Magellan, and northeastern Argentina. Included in the collections are a number of species hitherto unknown to science.

A further account of the expedition will appear in a later issue of the NEWS.

NEGRO ART IN WEST AFRICA AND THE NEW WORLD

By WILFRID D. HAMBLY
CURATOR OF AFRICAN ETHNOLOGY

During the past few years, since the main installation of the African Ethnology Halls (D and E) was completed, several valuable objects have been acquired at Field Museum by presentation and exchange. These are now displayed in Case 13A, Hall D.

The objects which first arrest a visitor's attention are headdresses covered with cowrie shells, which were obtained by exchange with a Belgian museum. Under European influence there is a tendency for tribal initiation ceremonies to become obsolete, and ethnologists are therefore gratified to obtain such fine old specimens as these from the Belgian Congo. Regalia of initiation are treated with the utmost reverence and are carefully concealed from the eyes of women and uninitiated boys. The series of masks includes some exceptionally fine specimens from the Cameroons and Sierra Leone. Modern social movements have produced many of a feminist character, and from the Mendi tribe of Sierra Leone comes a mask used by girls who are graduating into a society which is concerned with

the promotion of women's rights. A peculiar form of wooden rattle shaken by boys is displayed near the masks.

Negro religion is based on a reverence for ancestors, and in this connection several wooden figures are of interest. Such sculptures should not be described as "gods" or "idols"; they are in all probability memorial figures commemorating some person of distinction now thought to be alive in the spirit world. One figure of this type, from Dahomey, was presented by Mrs. Laura C. Boulton, of Chicago.

The importance of social distinction in Negro Africa is illustrated by insignia of office such as carved wooden paddles, a large metal trident, hair combs, and ornaments. Two large ivory horns for blowing on ceremonial occasions are of a pattern difficult to obtain at the present day. Owing to European protection of elephants scarcely any ivory is now available for native use.

Among works of art which have no ceremonial meaning, mention should be made of mats woven from fiber of the raffia palm. This industry is carried on in many parts of West Africa, often by males who use a small loom. Dyes are manufactured by boiling vegetable fiber to extract the pigments. Two remarkably fine mats with woven designs of men and an antelope were presented by Mr. Stanley Field, President of the Museum, and Messrs. Henry J. Patten and Charles B. Pike, of Chicago.

Small brass weights from Ashanti recall the days when a king made revenue from his subjects by having an exceptionally heavy set of weights that he used only when buying gold dust, which was one of the chief mineral products of the country.

AFRICAN ART IN AMERICA

One principal object of this display is to show how African Negro art has been preserved in the New World. Religious beliefs, magical practices, and artistic skill have been handed down from slave ancestors who brought their culture from West Africa. Mr. Thorne Donnelley, of Chicago, is the donor of three drums from Haiti—these bear a remarkably close resemblance to African forms. The cultural connection of Bush Negroes of Dutch Guiana and the African Negroes who were their progenitors is further illustrated by a series of well-carved objects presented by Mrs. William G. Burt, of Old Lyme, Connecticut, and by Mr. and Mrs. Maurice Berkson, of Highland Park, Illinois.

Synopsis of the Plant Kingdom

The exhibits in the Hall of Plant Life (Hall 29) are planned to furnish a general view of the entire range of the vegetable kingdom, including various extinct groups of plants. Another object of this hall is to show as many as possible of the most important useful plants of the world.

CHINESE SCHOOL CHILDREN

(Continued from page 1)

of Chinese. They play in a bugle corps which welcomed and serenaded Mei-mei, the giant panda, when it arrived in Chicago recently for the Brookfield Zoo. Eugene is a first-class scout and has earned merit badges for horsemanship, firemanship, leathercraft, handicraft, and personal health. Roger has merit badges for horsemanship and handicraft. The boys go to public school, but for several hours each afternoon when school is over, and on Saturdays, they attend a private Chinese school and study many of the things that Shih-pin Wen and Chih-ping Wu study in China. They must learn the difficult Chinese written language, study Chinese history, and read what Confucius really did say.

ART TALENT REVEALED

Now on exhibition (in Hall 32, Case 38) are replicas of a girl and boy from north China, dressed in typical blue cotton clothes, and with faces and hands tinted like those of Roger and Eugene Moy. Photographs show the T'ung hsien classrooms, while samples of the exercises and art work done in those fourth- and sixth-grade classes line the back of the case. Some of this art work is surprisingly good. It is interesting to observe that these Chinese children saw and reproduced nature not realistically, but in the same conventional manner that adult Chinese artists employ. The sixth-grade textbooks are for history, geography, readings in Chinese classics, and nature study. In the fourth grade Chih-ping Wen concentrates on learning to read and write Chinese, but also studies hygiene, arithmetic, nature study, and art.

Planned for children, the labels are written in non-technical language and placed conveniently low. The assistance of Mrs. Elizabeth S. Stelle, of T'ung hsien, and of Dr. Tzechin Lu, Chinese Consul-General for Chicago, made the exhibit possible.

"The Memory Lingered On"

A recent visitor to Field Museum told the Librarian that he had come to the Library in 1911, and had found so much of interest that he thereupon resolved to return at the first opportunity. That opportunity finally came on April 13, 1940, when he again came to Chicago and spent a day in the reading room.

Museum Hours Extended for Summer Period

Summer visiting hours, 9 A.M. to 6 P.M. daily, including Sundays and holidays, will go into effect at Field Museum on May 1, and continue throughout the period up to and including September 2 (Labor Day).



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