

# Modern Mayas Honor Their Ancestors

Archæology

By EMMA REH STEVENSON

The present day archæologist in Mexico is not only searching out the temples and palaces of the old Maya civilization, but he is also interested in trying to pump new courage into the descendants of the Maya Indians, by showing them the great achievements of their famous race.

This interest of the archæologists in the modern Indians was demonstrated at the big party just given at the ruined city of Chichen Itza by the Carnegie Institution of Washington which is conducting excavations there, and by the Mexican government. The party commemorated the finishing of the Carnegie Institution's remarkable work of restoring the Temple of the Warriors at Chichen Itza. Scientists and natives joined in the fiesta. It was a great success and a good time was had by all the Maya Indians who came.

The "Warriors," as the newly restored temple is called, stands as an impressive example of what the Mayas once could do. With an old American flavor all its own, the great white structure, beautiful as any on the Greek Acropolis, stands in strange contrast today with the primitive palm-thatched Maya huts of sticks and adobe.

The restoring of the "Warriors" was not carried to completion but went as far as positive knowledge permitted in replacing the fallen stones. Parts of the groups of colonnades that flank the building on its sides have been set up again and others have been left as found to show the condition of the ruins before and after. The temple ruin now illustrates the accomplishments of the archæologists who have resur-

rected ancient beauty out of funereal piles of carved stones.

To dedicate the restored temple natives gathered from many villages. The Maya women came in their best "huipiles" and carried their babies. The Maya men came too, in their white cotton "pajamas" and home-made sandals, and stood around. Men and women keep apart, each sex in groups.

The dress of the woman of mixed Maya and white blood, and which is also worn by the pure blooded Maya woman, is one of the most beautiful and picturesque costumes in the world. It is a dress whose style has changed very little from the costume of the Maya women before the discovery of America.

The "huipil," as it is called, is nothing but a white one-piece sleeveless overdress. The square cut neck and the bottom of the skirt are heavily embroidered in every rainbow shade of color. The dress is short and a number of fancy white petticoats show about a foot at the bottom. The women wear their hair in a "tuch" at the top of the head in the back, tied with a pretty ribbon.

The official dedication of the building of the "Warriors" to the modern descendants of the original builders, took place in front of this temple at 11 in the morning under the burning tropical sun. The roof which once capped the extensive colonnades along the sides of the temple must have offered a welcome shade to the great gatherings of Mayas held here in prehistoric times.

At two in the afternoon, the party proper started at the American hacienda, that is the headquarters of the Carnegie Expedition working at

the ruins. The "O Jarana," the typical dance of the peninsula, began to the best music in Yucatan and to the babble of the Maya tongue which seems made up of queer little stutters, sneezes and sudden gasps. The "O Jarana" is a dance that has probably changed but little since ancient times. The Maya men and women for the first time during the fiesta begin to pay some attention to each other's existence. The mute man partner touches the lady friend of his choice on the arm and they enter the ring together. They never touch one another and very rarely look at each other but begin the choppy Yucatecan jig that is similar also to the step of most Mexican religious dances.

The sex element is almost entirely lacking in this dance, and Dr. Sylvanus G. Morley, head of the Carnegie Expedition, believes that sex never did play the important part among the American Indians that it does with the white race. To the white visitors it seemed a solemn dance without happiness, for the dancers register no emotion of any kind in their faces. What emotion there was, was in the swift heels that followed the rapid time of the music perfectly.

It was "dia de fiesta" in the cluster of palm huts that have grown up about the ruins, and the element of sacrifice, so typical in ancient times, was not lacking. Dona Victoria, the dusky fat mistress of a Maya boarding house in a palm hut, sacrificed the black hog that waked up her boarders in the early morning by grunting about their hammocks.

*Science News-Letter, March 31, 1928*

## Evolution Since Darwin

Evolution

An example of evolutionary effects in a breed of domestic poultry originally noticed by Darwin, the white-faced Spanish fowl, has gone on evolving rapidly under the guidance of artificial selection, according to a British student of poultry, F. Finn, who writes in *Nature*. When Darwin knew the breed, Mr. Finn states, its face and the sides of its head were covered with white skin, and its earlobes were prominent and pendulous. This white skin has developed even more extensively during the half-century since Darwin called attention to the birds, and the earlobes have vanished as such, having been merged in a sort of horizontal dewlap that hangs across the cock's throat.

*Science News-Letter, March 31, 1928*

## Is "Coronium" Disguised Argon?

Astrophysica

Coronium, the mysterious substance in the sun's corona that only manifests itself in spectrum photographs made at the time of a total solar eclipse, is probably due to argon, third most abundant gas in the air. This has been found by researches carried on at the Ryerson Physical Laboratory of the University of Chicago, by Dr. Ira M. Freeman.

"Coronium" was first found in 1869 when, in the eclipse of that year, astronomers noticed a strange line of green color in the spectrum of the corona. This is the extremely rarefied outer layer of the sun that is visible only when the central disc of

the sun is obscured by the moon. Ever since that time physicists have been trying to find the cause of it and a group of unknown lines that were later discovered.

Dr. Freeman has found that 18 of these lines can be identified as those of the element argon, which occupies nearly one per cent. of the atmosphere. Other observations of the sun with the aid of the spectroscope have never shown the presence of argon, but, Dr. Freeman points out, it may well be that it is present but that it is quite possible the conditions on the sun are not just right for it to be in evidence ordinarily.

*Science News-Letter, March 31, 1928*