

# The World is Their Classroom

By FRANK THONE

"A student on one end of a log and a good teacher on the other."

The man who first made this classic condensation of the essentials of a university education never expected to see the notion literally carried out.

Yet it is being done. In a score of places, scattered over the whole earth, students really are sitting on the ends of logs, getting their instructions from teachers sitting on the other ends.

And what teachers they are listening to! Some of them are breech-clouted savages of the tropical jungle with brass rings in their noses. Some of them are blanketed Indians, far up in the sub-arctic forests of Canada. Some are swarthy peasants in the hills of Sicily. Some have been dead a hundred thousand years, and have left to the students memoranda of their problems, chipped on stone or scratched on bone, as a modern professor leaves the day's lesson written on the blackboard when he has to cut his class.

The students are members of the advanced courses in anthropology at the University of Chicago, and they have been scattered to the ends of the earth, to learn their lessons from the inhabitants thereof, because their professors, Dr. Fay-Cooper Cole and Dr. Edward Sapir, take seriously the dictum of Louis Agassiz: "Study nature, not books." A student who wants to make anthropology his life work receives enough training of the conventional classroom kind to lay the foundation, and then he is sent off, perhaps halfway round the world, to sit on the end of a log and learn about human beings from human beings. Prof. Cole's laboratory is the biggest laboratory in the world, for all the lands of the earth itself are its floor and the sky is its ceiling. There are no walls.

It must not be thought, however, that this business of traveling ten thousand miles or so for a course of instruction *al fresco* is just a big, adventurous picnic. There are ticks in the jungle, and mosquitoes on the tundras; bathtubs are rare in Sicily, and well-stocked cafeterias are even rarer in the heart of Australia. One sleeps how one can, and eats what comes to the table. And if mail doesn't come from home oftener than once in three or four months that has to be accepted as part of the game.



RICHARD MARTIN uncovers a real prize—a Hittite burial dating back to about 700 B. C.

Tuition for end-of-the-log instruction comes a bit high, sometimes. Nevertheless, Prof. Cole's students take it all cheerfully, girls as well as men.

For there are young women who have undertaken this arduous but fascinating first-hand study of human beings of other lands. One of the most interesting of these field problems has been tackled by the decidedly attractive Miss Charlotte Gower, who has been appointed to a fellowship of the Social Science Research Council. She has gone up into the mountains of Sicily, to a remote and inaccessible village where railway trains and automobiles are known only by hearsay, and where one gets about either on muleback or on foot.

But even before she crossed the Atlantic, Miss Gower had been in Sicily, even in this village. Out in Chicago's crowded South Side, in the heart of Little Italy, lives a close-knit group of the townsmen of this place, held together by ties of blood, language, home memories—foreigners even among foreigners. Miss Gower took up quarters among these people, made friends with them, gossiped with the women, played with the *bambini*, learned their particular dialect of Sicilian—which is about as much like the King's (and Il Duce's) Italian as Swedish is like English.

Thus equipped, the young American

woman has gone to Sicily, up into the high-perched nest whence this brood "took off" for its flight to America. She takes with her the language, that first key to a stranger's confidence. She takes some knowledge of their ways, a wide acquaintance of relatives in the magic New World, greetings from the migrants to the "old folks in the old country." With the entree which all these will give her, she will make the acquaintance of the villagers, live with them, learn their folkways, their codes of behavior, their superstitions, which are centuries older than their religion. On a previous trip to this same village she lodged with the local midwife, who of course was a veritable mine of peasant lore.

Upon her return to this country, Miss Gower will return to the South Side colony. There she will re-study the ways of her transplanted Sicilian friends, seeing which of their customs have survived the transplanting into American soil, and what the new environment has done by way of modifying them. Later she plans to visit one of their agricultural settlements in the south, and then see another group which has taken up mining in America.

Not dissimilar is the task which Miss Dena Shapiro has set for herself: only in- (Turn to next page)

## The World is Their Classroom—*Continued*

stead of studying her immigrants here in America she has to go abroad to find them. One of the most seething of all the post-war melting-pots has been Palestine, into which Jews, from all their hundred countries of exile, have been poured by the Zionist movement. It is not merely that adjustments have to be made between the newcomers and the long-established Mussulman, Christian and native Jewish populations; the newcomers themselves are a highly mixed group. The mental outlook, the customs, even the speech, of a Jewish immigrant from Ukraina are different from those of a German Jew, and vastly different from those of a Spanish or Algerian son of Abraham. The effervescences—and even occasional explosions—that accompany their mixing-reactions offer one of the liveliest and most interesting studies in race migrations and race adjustments to be found anywhere in the modern world, and it is to take advantage of this that Miss Shapiro has gone to Palestine.

From the devoted and zealously intellectual Zionists, toiling under the Asian sun, to the simple but wood-wise Indians of northern Canada is a far cry. And as great a contrast can be found between Miss Shapiro, a typically American co-ed of the good-looking but brainy variety, and Dr. F. K. Li, the scholarly son of Confucius who has betaken himself into the most lost lands of the world, blandly leaving word to expect him back when the snows drive him southward again. Dr. Li has held a Harvard fellowship and is now a Rockefeller fellow; at Chicago they say that he is one of the most brilliant linguists in the history of the department.

He has already scored a success in the study of Indian languages. In California he got alongside of two Indians who were the only survivors of an extinct tribe, and took down a record of their speech before it was too late. One of the Indians had not spoken his mother tongue for over thirty years. Last year Dr. Li visited the Indians of the McKenzie valley, to study the Chipewyan language, and this summer he is spending among the almost unknown Hare tribe of the Great Slave Lake region. When he has completed his Indian language studies he will return to China to carry on further researches on the

history and structure of his own native speech.

In his present venture into the land of the Hares, Dr. Li has had an American forerunner. Almost two years ago another Chicago student, Cornelius B. Osgood, bade farewell to civilization and went out to this last edge of the Indian hunting grounds. The Hares are a tribe as shy and suspicious of strangers as their name indicates. Mr. Osgood has made friends with them and has been accepted as their companion, living their meager life and trying, as best a white man may, to think their primitive thoughts. It has been an epic of hardship, short rations, cold and dirt; but when Mr. Osgood comes out this fall, on the last steamboat that plies the river before it freezes solid, he will have in his pack a wealth of brand-new information about these hitherto unknown Indians.

Another and remoter British dominion, Australia, will be the field in which Gerhardt Laves expects to work. He has left for the southern continent, where he expects to gather material for his doctor's dissertation among the black aborigines. The common statement about the "black fellows" of the Australian interior is that they are the most primitive people now existing. This is correct in a sense, for their cultural level is very low; but the idea that they therefore represent a correspondingly low level in human evolution is misleading, according to Prof. Cole. It is more probable that their ancestors were once more advanced, but retrogressed when they migrated into a land where meals are lacking and food often hard to get. The Australians therefore represent a people literally starved into a lower level of savagery.

But it is in their language that Mr. Laves is especially interested. This will make his task a little easier, for he will not have to seek isolated roving bands who have had no contact with white men. He can go to the ranch villages and mission stations, where the "black fellows" congregate as friendly Indians used to around our western trading posts, make friends with them and get their vocabulary into his notebook. Since very little study has been devoted to the language of the Australian natives, practically everything he catches will be "new specimens."

Mr. Laves' one-man expedition will

mark the cooperation of two widely separated sister universities, for he will be representing the University of Sydney as well as the University of Chicago.

A really primitive people, the Siang-Dyaks of Borneo, will be the objective of John H. Provinse, who has gone into the interior of that great, mysterious tropical island with the All-American Lyric Expedition. Mr. Provinse expects to spend a year with this almost unknown people, whose only contact with the scientific world so far has been a scouting expedition into their territory by Prof. Cole himself, when he was in Malaya some years ago.

Wider wanderings in the South Sea will be required in the researches of Gilbert McAllister. He will be working under the direction of the Bishop Museum of Honolulu, and his task will be a general ethnological survey of the island peoples. To the chance tourist all natives look alike, but as a matter of fact these brown brothers of Moana represent one of the most complicated and baffling racial tangles to be found anywhere in the world. The sea was a highway for their migrations, and each island or archipelago a small but intensely active melting-pot. Furthermore, the oral traditions of most of the island tribes are fragmentary, though some of the pieces are fairly definite. All in all an attempt to construct a genealogical tree for those tribes is a promisingly tough job, and will probably keep Mr. McAllister busy as long as he chooses to remain at it.

The challenge of the dim dawn of time, no less than the lure of far horizons, proves attractive to the Chicago students. For archaeology serves the ends of anthropology, if the broken images and weapons and potsherds turned up by the inquisitive spade are intelligently read. Out in the same vast Pacific area that has called several of his colleagues, Wendell Bennett is working under the auspices of the Bishop Museum, searching for prehistoric records of the Kanakas, original inhabitants of the Hawaiian islands, and correlating what he finds with native life as it exists today—or did just yesterday. For the Kanakas are said to be a dwindling people; certainly their life has been radically changed by contact with the white, (*Turn to next page*)

## The World is Their Classroom—*Continued*

yellow and brown newcomers who have poured into their islands, and if anything is to be salvaged of their story prompt work is necessary. They were not monument-builders, the Kanakas; so for his documents Mr. Bennett must seek out ancient village sites and burial grounds, sifting every scoopful of earth for weapon or ornament or implement, and plotting the position of everything he finds—for the arrangement of things, quite as often as the things themselves, yields readable information to the searching scientist.

When we were kids in Sunday school, mention of the Hittites used to crop up occasionally in Old Testament history. These people with the extremely combative name (they deserved it) supplied warlike diversion to other peoples besides the Hebrews; indeed, the small Kingdom of Israel was among the least of their troubles. They had a powerful empire centering in Asia Minor, and their armies clashed with the mighty hosts of the pharaohs long before Tut Ankh Amen was born. As a matter of fact, when King Tut died his young widow tried to make a match with a Hittite prince, in order to hold her power.

But most of what we know about Hittite history has been told us by their neighbors—Hebrews, Egyptians, Babylonians. They left few monuments, fewer inscriptions, and no parchments or papyri at all. They were not a scholarly folk. Digging for facts in Hittite territory, therefore, is not the easiest job in the world; but like many hard tasks it brings a good reward when it brings any at all. So another student, Richard Martin, has gone a-hunting Hittites, under the auspices of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago.

One unique and highly valuable find in the Hittite campaign has been a group of burials, dug up to the east of Palestine. These are the only skeletons of Hittites that have ever been found in good enough condition to be studied, and measurements of the skulls are beginning to answer some of the puzzling questions about the race and origin of this important people of antiquity. The skulls are of medium size, and of a shape which Prof. Cole characterizes as "proto-Mediterranean"; that is, of the same general character as the ancient Italians and Greeks, but more primitive,



*PROF. FAY-COOPER COLE, whose office is at the University of Chicago but whose classroom is the world*

and suggestive in some ways of the ancient Egyptians.

Unlike the Hittites, Indians aren't mentioned in the Bible; nevertheless the American red men buik large in our childhood memories, fed on the tales of pioneering grandparents. It is only natural therefore that Indian archaeology should claim its share of the Chicago group's attention. For one thing, the Indian mounds that dot the Illinois prairies furnish beautiful material for shorter expeditions, and give 'prentice anthropologists a chance to show how much in earnest they are about a profession that is, after all, about nine-tenths pick-and-shovel work. Prof. Cole has undertaken a comprehensive survey of all the mounds remaining in Illinois, and is saving as many of them as he can from the ruinous activities of relic-hunting amateurs.

A little farther afield, there are students digging in the ruins of the higher Indian civilization of our Southwest. These are Paul Martin and Paul Nesbitt. Mr. Martin is already the veteran of two expeditions to the famous ruins of Chichen Itza in Yucatan, under the Carnegie Institution of Washington. At Chichen, he uncovered and reassembled the stones of a small but beautiful Maya temple. Just now he is investigating

the ruins of an exceedingly ancient type of Pueblo structure, which appears to be the forerunner of those great piles of masonry built by the Southwestern Indians, and appropriately called the first apartment houses in America.

Mr. Nesbitt also is the veteran of a campaign far afield. He was associated with Alonzo Pond of the Beloit Museum in the discovery in northern Africa of relics of an Old Stone Age race of human beings that have set one of the most puzzling problems on which anthropologists are now racking their wits. The implements found in the site resemble those used by the famous Cro-Magnon race, but the five skulls—one of a child, the others of adults—are distinctly "modern" in type, with nothing Cro-Magnon about them. These ancient-modern people would be instantly hailed by comic section editors as ancestors of the French, for they apparently lived almost entirely on snails. Most of the relics of their culture, as well as the burials that have been brought to light, were dug up out of vast heaps of snail-shells.

Mr. Pond, although as yet scarcely turned thirty, is one of the old campaigners of the Chicago group. His first expedition, under the Logan Museum of Beloit College, resulted in the Stone Age finds in the snail-shell heaps. After that, he went hunting relics of still older man in inner Asia, with the Roy Chapman Andrews expedition of the American Museum of Natural History. Then back to northern Africa, where he is laboring at present. He plans next to go to South Africa, where recent finds, of alleged sensational significance in the story of man's evolution, have been exciting the interest of anthropologists and paleontologists.

*Science News-Letter, October 5, 1929*

### Hog Big as Auto

The fossil skeleton of a giant hog which stood seven feet tall has just been mounted in Morrell Hall at the University of Nebraska. The terrible pig in his prehistoric day was as high as the tallest modern automobile and had a wheel base of about 140 inches.

The fossil was dug up in Sioux County, Nebraska. Only two of the giants have ever been discovered.

*Science News-Letter, October 5, 1929*