

Expedition Seeks "Living Archaeology"

Convinced that there is a vast field of living archæology among the little-known modern Indian races of Mexico, that it can cast as much light on their ancient past as ruined temples and hieroglyphics, Dr. Frans Blom, archæologist of Tulane University in New Orleans, has just left for Chiapas.

Before leaving Mexico City Dr. Blom stated that he will study the modern scenes of the ancient Mayan Empire that flourished in the early centuries after Christ in southern Mexico and Central America. He will penetrate territory as yet unexplored, and hopes to fill in many blank spaces on modern maps of southern Mexico.

Dr. Blom is heading a truly cosmopolitan group of explorers, six in number. He himself is a Danish archæologist and geographer with about four years' experience in the Mexican field, having first worked with Dr. Manuel Gamio, well-known Mexican archæologist.

With him are two American college boys, who, Dr. Blom said, are boys in years and looks only. Louis Bristow, 21 years old, a medical student of Tulane University, will have the job of collecting anthropometric data, such as the taking of foot and hand prints of modern Indians, as well as blood samples, and making measurements of any ancient bones or skeletons that may be encountered. This data will be studied later by scientists at Tulane University.

The second student, Felix McBryde, aged 20, has specialized in natural sciences. His hobby is birds, and he expects to be able to make many original observations on the side, in the "Land of the Quetzal," the bird whose feathers made the "plumed serpent" of Mexico famous. The two students were picked five months ago by the president of Tulane University and have been preparing for the trip ever since. Mr. McBryde has been studying photography and will take photographs and motion picture films of the expedition.

The fourth member of the party is Gustavo Kanter, 24 years old, a Guatemalan boy of German parentage, who speaks two of the Indian languages that will be encountered in the tropical jungles, Chug and Jacaltecan. The fifth is a Mexican of Spanish and Indian blood, Ciriaco Aguilar, aged 28, who speaks the

Tzeltac tongue. Aguilar will manage the transportation of the party.

The sixth member of the party is Prof. Carlos Basauri, ethnologist, of the Mexican Department of education, who has made numerous ethnological studies of Indian races of Mexico for the department of Rural education. Prof. Basauri will study manners, customs, religions, and other characteristics of the little-known races to be encountered, as well as gather physical anthropological data.

The expedition will be seven months on the trail which will take them through Tapachula, Comitán, Ocosingo and El Desierto de Tzendales, all in the Mexican state of Chiapas, to Flores on Lake Peten and Uaxactun in Guatemala, and then through Quintana Roo and Yucatan. The expedition will end at Chichen Itza, where the Carnegie Expedition of Washington, D. C., is now excavating under the direction of Dr. Sylvanus Morley.

Dr. Blom is by temperament peculiarly fitted for exploration among strange people in unknown territory, for he has the reputation of having a "way" with Indians. The party will depend for the most of their food upon the success of these "ways" with the natives, and upon their rifles. Asked what Indians do who have never seen a white man when an exploration party approaches, Dr. Blom replied that they act like Americans when a circus comes to town. They stand around and stare and poke their noses into the baggage and equipment.

The party is taking along the minimum of impedimenta. The only food they carry is rice, beans, sugar, salt and coffee. The two college boys have had training in first aid and the party is equipped with medicines. They have all been inoculated "against everything," the archæologist stated. They will arrive in Chiapas at the beginning of the dry season. The first part of the trail will be through tropical jungles where there is plenty of shade and water, but they are running certain risks when they get up into Quintana Roo and Yucatan later, unless the rainy season begins in time for them.

The difference between this archæological expedition and others in the field is that they are especially equipped to study the modern characteristics of the strange races they

will encounter, as well as the ruins of ancient temples and carvings on rock. Many races of Indians now existing in the territory they will cross have changed very little from prehistoric times, Dr. Blom said, and many customs exist today which can throw much light on archæological mysteries.

An archæologist will dig some strange object from the ground near a ruin, said Dr. Blom, and while he is theorizing as to what it is, a little Indian boy may come up and look at it and say, "Why my mother has one of those too." Thus many times, the explanation of ancient relics may lie in modern customs of the Indians, and the story of the past can be much better reconstructed by a study of the present, together with archæological remains.

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ASTRONOMY

Comet Not Old Visitor

Suggestions that the recently discovered Skjellerup's comet is the same as De Vico's Comet, which came in 1848 are not substantiated by the latest calculations of the comet's path. It is therefore highly improbable that they are the same, says Dr. Harlow Shapley, director of the Harvard College Observatory. The latest calculation of the orbit that he has received is one computed by Dr. George Van Biesbroeck, of the Yerkes Observatory. This orbit, says Dr. Shapley, shows that the orbits of both De Vico's and Skjellerup's comets were both in the same plane. The latter, however, came to within one quarter the distance of the sun of the former, and its direction from the sun when closest was quite different.

Skjellerup's comet has now faded to the fifth magnitude, and is gradually moving south, so that soon it will be seen only with powerful telescopes from southern observatories.

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More than four-fifths of Yellowstone Park is heavily forested.

The hunting leopard of India has traits of both the dog and cat families.

Ponies were first dwarfed by living in cold unfavorable surroundings in northern Europe.

In a region of oil fields, motorists in Bogota, Colombia, pay 37 cents a gallon for gas.