

SCIENCE

VOL. LVIII

JULY 27, 1923

No. 1491

THE EDUCATIONAL VALUE OF A UNIVERSITY NATURAL HIS- TORY MUSEUM¹

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SCIENCE: A Weekly Journal devoted to the Advancement of Science, edited by J. McKeen Cattell and published every Friday by

THE SCIENCE PRESS

Lancaster, Pa.

Garrison, N. Y.

New York City: Grand Central Terminal.

Annual Subscription, \$6.00. Single Copies, 15 Cts.

SCIENCE is the official organ of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. Information regarding membership in the association may be secured from the office of the permanent secretary, in the Smithsonian Institution Building, Washington, D. C.

Application made for transfer of entry as second-class matter to the Post Office at Lancaster, Pa.

IN President Rea's address before the 1920 meeting of the museums association it is stated that 38 per cent. of the 600 museums of the United States are supported by colleges and universities, and that of this number but five expended \$1,000 or more in the year 1910. It is also stated that of this 38 per cent. the great majority are uncared for or ill cared for. With a few notable exceptions this statement is true of the natural history museums of 90 per cent. of the colleges and universities.

The reason for this deplorable condition is not hard to find. A generation or two ago the study of natural history, or "natural theology," centered about collections of natural history material—corals, shells, fossils, minerals, birds, etc.—and taxonomy was considered the *summum bonum* of science. As time passed, the wonderful discoveries in genetics, in evolution, in experimental biology, gradually superseded the previous systematic studies, museum specimens were used less and less, and finally, in many colleges, ceased altogether. The museums were nominally under the charge of a professor of zoology or geology, who gave little time to the care of the material. The collections in these colleges have thus gradually gone from bad to worse, and in many cases the perishable material is now of little or no value.

An instance is recalled that in one museum in a large university a collection of kangaroos had been received and stored in a room on the upper floor of a building, where they remained for a number of years. When examined it was found that moth larvae had eaten away the bases of the hairs and the whole back came off like a blanket when touched. This entire collection was thus completely ruined because of lack of funds to provide a tight case and some one to care for the material. In another university a valuable collection of insects had to be destroyed because of its infestation with dermestids. These examples could probably be duplicated many times.

What, then, is the remedy for this distressing condition which renders so large a percentage of our university and college museums ineffectual and a re-

¹ Contribution from the Museum of Natural History, University of Illinois, No. 30. Read before the American Association of Museums, May, 1922.

Science

58 (1491)

Science **58** (1491), 55-74.

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