

'Human heredity can be improved only by a wise selection of parents for the next generation. You can improve the human race by falling in love intelligently'. Words fail an Englishman when he sees things like this in a museum. But the lesson gets home, and it is small wonder that this particular museum is one of the most popular in America, even if it is startling to a mere European.

At another new American museum, that at Trenton, New Jersey, which for beauty of interior design and presentation exhibits is probably unequalled among the smaller museums, they have developed the extremely novel idea of having loan collections of live animals. Guinea pigs, white rats, snakes, turtles, and parakeets are lent out to children, apparently without injury either to the animals or the children.

Topicality in the Museum

Buffalo in New York State also teaches us how broadcasting and museums may be linked up into a vigorous educational factor. Every month special newspaper supplements, copiously illustrated, are prepared to synchronise with talks over the wireless. Almost every conceivable subject, from art to engineering, can be, and in fact has been, treated by Buffalo in this manner, including subjects so diverse as sculpture and Mendel's law.

It is a pleasing thought that already proposals are being considered for the linking up of some of the finest B.B.C. talks with museum and school demonstrations early this year. The first proposal is that for a series of talks in the B.B.C.'s summer programme a score or so of our best museums shall arrange a parallel series of exhibits, and that THE LISTENER, with its articles and illustrations, shall further emphasise the salient points of these talks.

There is, indeed, much to be done before we can claim first place in all the various aspects of museum activities, and it seems to me that five or six urgent fundamental things require to be done in several of our museums before we can hope to attain all-round excellence.

The first is, as Sir Henry Miers and others have so often said, that there should be appointed to every museum a first-class, well-qualified curator. It is certainly not to our credit that in nearly 100 of our museums there is no one who answers to this description. Priceless collections are cared for by 'caretakers', or by overworked librarians, with sad results all round.

Secondly, curators should be paid adequate salaries. Apart from our leading national and provincial museums, the salary scales for curators are disgraceful. I have before me a list showing the so-called 'salaries' that some municipal corporations pay their curators—the average level is well below that of the Burnham scale for teachers!

Thirdly, every museum should define its policy so as to give the greatest educational advantages to the area in which it is situated. Some museum committees still think it their duty to accept everything that may be offered—no matter whether it be a bird of paradise or an assegai. It would appear that the ideal sequence for a local museum might be somewhat on the following lines:

1. The land—its soil, minerals and topographical features.
2. The vegetable products—grasses, vegetables, fruits, timbers.
3. The fauna of the area.

4. The effect of these three factors upon the history of the area—*e.g.*, early developments and more recent economic features.
5. The cultural characteristics of the area—*e.g.*, art, education, and government.

Providing for the Research Worker

Fourthly, research should be given much more attention. At the moment all sorts of difficulties are placed in the way of research students—more than half of our museums have no place where such a student can work, reserve collections are often stored in basements, and there is no means of ascertaining the whereabouts of cognate material except by the most laborious enquiries. Quite recently two cases have been brought to my notice that bear out this statement. One student was making a special study of feathered Hawaiian capes—those beautiful robes of dignity which are becoming scarcer and scarcer, and another—a distinguished archæologist—was desirous of obtaining the fullest possible information regarding Moslem objects bearing Arabic inscriptions or Moslem coats-of-arms. Both found that there was no 'subject-index' of the contents of our museums in existence; both found that the staffs of great national museums were singularly unaware

as to the contents or even the whereabouts of smaller museums scattered up and down the country; both found that their only means of approach was to write letters to certain newspapers and *The Museums Journal*, and to hope that the information would then pour in. Fortunately, in both cases, much information was secured through this last-named method, but there are hundreds of research workers at universities, and elsewhere in this country, who, not knowing the ropes, find their tasks rendered much more



The Travelling Museum—The Board of Education of St. Louis, Missouri, circulates and lends museum specimens and books to schools and institutions, delivering them by motor van

difficult owing to the lack of a comprehensive subject-index. Such a work would involve a detailed contents survey of each of our museums and then the grouping of these contents under the five great main headings of art, archæology, natural history, science and industry. Under these headings there would, of course, be subdivisions—as, for instance, under archæology, there would be special sections for British archæology with its sub-sections for Roman, Saxon, Mediæval, Tudor, Elizabethan, etc., and every museum that had any objects of the given period would be listed. Thus a student could ascertain almost at a glance the whereabouts of every collection in this country dealing with his particular subject.

We have already seen what an effect a given concentration of material has upon research workers, for the Flemish, Persian, French and other exhibitions recently held in London have produced an amazing series of books on those subjects which certainly have added to the world's knowledge. It becomes, in fact, almost easy to write a thesis when all the material is in front of one, and the great function of such a subject-index would be to enable the student to effect his own comparisons with the minimum waste of time.

We have, indeed, the richest treasure houses in the world, and a really zealous body of men in our curators who, in spite of low salaries and often very difficult working conditions, are doing their utmost to make them better in every way, so that any adult or any child may find them real Tom Tiddler's grounds from which may be garnered the gold of education and the gossamer threads of beauty.