

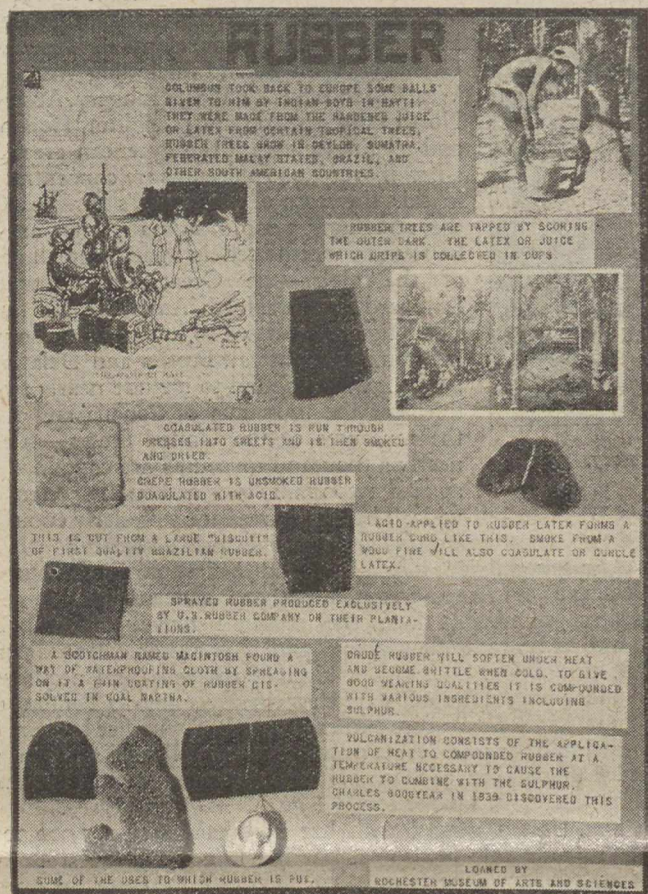
best field for museum development; thus, for instance, South Africa, India, British West Indies and Algeria, all have excellent museums, but here the population quota increases to approximately 160,000 in the case of South Africa and to 4,000,000 in the case of India. The Mongolian countries all have excellent museums, but here again the proportion is high,

for instance, at the moment, the severest economy is being practised in connection with museums and art galleries, an economy so severe that in certain notorious cases retrograde steps are being taken that may permanently imperil very valuable collections. In Germany, too, there is the severest economy.

The most remarkable fact of all is that Sweden and Germany have achieved their museum eminence not because of their wealth—or lack of it—but because of the real determination of every town and large village to have a museum of its own—a Heimat museum or a Rural Museum—an ideal that is certainly possible here in Great Britain, for nowhere in the world are there such interesting old houses, or such quaint survivals to be preserved.

**Real Educational Centres**

Sometimes in my more optimistic moments, I wish that everyone in Great Britain would join the Museums Association, whose headquarters are at 39B Alfred Place, S.W. 7. This is the only organisation in the British Empire that endeavours to improve the museum service throughout the whole length and breadth of those far flung territories. It has already assisted in bringing the greater number of our home museums up to that degree of perfection which is at once the envy and goal of many other countries, and its great task now is still to expand their usefulness until they all become first-class educational museums. I would like to see every one of them steal ideas from Huddersfield, Haslemere, Leicester and a dozen other places, especially that provocative museum at Buffalo, New York State, which is the real Bolshevick of the movement. I would like to see our institutions even better equipped, with still finer buildings. I would like to see them still more freely open to children, who should be allowed to run the less



An informative Museum Case, showing the stages of rubber production. At Rochester Museum, New York State

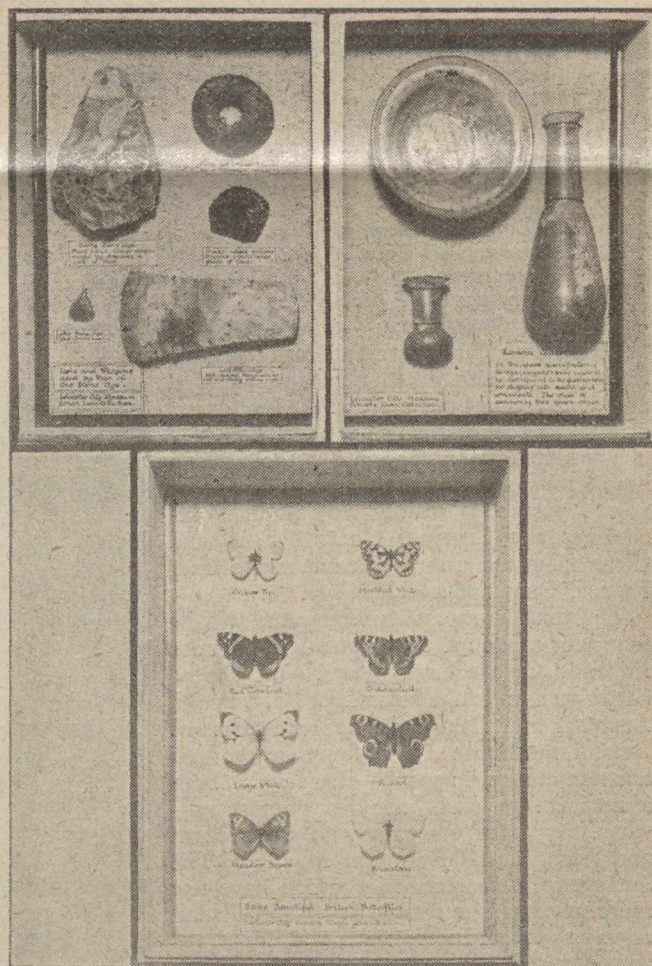
the ratio in Japan, probably the most advanced of all the Mongolian countries, being one museum per half-million people, and in China and Siam the proportionate ratio is still higher.

It is, therefore, peculiarly evident that wherever western civilisation has reached its zenith, the museum movement is also to be found at its best, and by inversion it is also true that where the museum movement is at its best, there civilisation has reached its highest limits. No backward race has ever yet evolved a museum, and the more progressive races vie with one another in the extent and value of their collections.

No less than thirty-five years ago, a distinguished American, Dr. Brown Goode, of the Smithsonian Institution, laid down this dictum 'The degree of civilisation to which any nation, city or province has attained is best shown by the character of its public museums and the liberality with which they are maintained'. There is no other form of social or educational service that possesses quite such an effective key.

It is, therefore, perhaps true to say that of all the criteria by which one could judge the comparative advance or decline of modern civilisation in various countries, the museum movement is one of the best, and it is even more curious to note that in recent history, as nations have risen so has the movement improved with them. For instance, the Golden Age of Great Britain was probably the latter half of the Victorian era, and it is a noteworthy fact that more museums were founded during this period than in any comparable period before or since. Similarly with Germany, in the quarter of a century preceding the War, museums were founded at the rate of one a month, a rate of progress that has only been equalled in these more recent years by the United States of America.

From these premises, one may be able to deduce what the future holds in store for the various countries concerned, if the museum movement is taken as a yard-stick. In Great Britain,



Three Loan Collection Cases provided for Schools by the Leicester Museum

breakable parts. Children are extremely intelligent and appreciative, and incidentally are highly critical. They should have their hobby clubs in a hundred subjects from snake-keeping to Egyptology, and I would almost guarantee that museum children would pass their examination yards ahead of non-museum ones.

England, of course, ought not to follow too closely upon