

## MUSEUMS AS EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS.

BY M. Y. WILLIAMS.

Ask the average Canadian to name our educational institutions and it is scarcely likely that "Museums" would be included in the list. Ask a dweller in New York City the same question, and if he omitted "Museums" he would show that he failed to appreciate the advantages at his very doors.

Modern pedagogy recognizes the importance of studying objects rather than the description of objects; the modern museums display, in instructive and attractive manner, things gathered from the great and wonderful world around us. We have primary and secondary schools, and higher up are the colleges and universities, but museums include among their attending students the toddling infant, and the grey-haired patriarch.

Let us consider some few of the things which great museums have to teach us. One of the newest as well as one of the greatest of the museums on this continent, is the American Museum of Natural History, situated in New York City. Its exhibits are multitudinous and truly impressive. Who can view understandingly the wonderful mounted specimens of the reptilean monsters of the dim geologic past, without having a broader, more profound, more accurate view of the brief moment of time in which we live? Who can stand before those creations of art, the background bird groups, without having a better understanding and appreciation of the beauties of our bird life in its natural setting? Such work is as truly the work of the artist, as are paintings and statues! The wonderful array of minerals and the priceless collections of gems and precious stones illustrate the best that the rocks have to reveal. As wanderers from outer space, there are to be seen some of the largest meteorites known. Among them are included Peary's wonderful specimens from Greenland, one of which is as large as an explorer's tent.

And what of the National Museum at Washington? Few will fail to recall the wonderful groups of American aboriginals, transfixed as it were near their habitations in the midst of their daily tasks, with their implements, and food supplies nearby; nor can the fine groups of African game animals be forgotten, including rhinoceros, buffaloes and lions, collected by Colonel Theodore Roosevelt.

From the Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago, the visitor carries away a better understanding and clearer picture of African antelope, hyenas, zebras and leopards in their natural habitat than pages of descriptive writing could have given.

The Milwaukee Public Museum takes the visitor back to the days of early colonial life in America, and depicts a street scene, say in Massachusetts, with small frame houses, homemade furniture, dove cotes, and people dressed in simple homespun. Fine groups of mammals and birds and many other exhibits are there, but the colonial village is unique.

The New York State Museum at Albany illustrates in wonderfully realistic form, the early fish-like creatures of the geologic past, and one of the earliest trees known from fossil remains. The Iroquois Indian groups, prepared from Indian models, under the direction of a Mohawk Indian, perpetuate the memories of Indian life as it was when Champlain was founding Canada.

And there are other great museums at Pittsburg, Brooklyn, Boston, Philadelphia, and elsewhere, all teaching their lessons to the visitor. Volumes could be written descriptive of them, each writer depicting those exhibits which appeal to him most.

It must not, however, be supposed that the public exhibits make up the entire museum, nor that all specimens are placed on exhibit. Great as is the popular educative value of exhibits, many specimens must also be preserved for comparison and study by specialists and research students. Zoological specimens generally fade when placed on exhibit, and groups of mammals, birds and insects have to be replaced by new material from time to time. So it happens that for every specimen on exhibit hundreds or in many cases thousands of valuable specimens may be carefully stored away, where they are available for study, or to replace other exhibits.

Besides the exhibitions and the special researches carried on by modern museums, lecture halls are provided, where members of the staff lecture to students from schools and colleges and to the public in general.

So far reference has been made to the museums of the United States only; let us now turn to the museums of Canada. Among these are the provincial Museum of British Columbia, at Victoria, the Banff Park Museum, the Redpath Museum of Natural History at McGill University, Montreal, the Museum of the Natural History Society of New Brunswick at St. John, the Royal Ontario Museum at Toronto, and the Geological Survey Museum housed in the Victoria Memorial Museum at Ottawa.

The British Columbia Museum is particularly mentioned by visitors because it contains a complete collection of the game animals of the province. The Banff Museum appeals to tourists because of its