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FOSSIL COLLECTING.*

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INTRODUCTION.

Away back in the mists of antiquity, so long ago that no record of him survives, "some pastoral savage, more reflective and less practical than his brethren," made the first collection of fossils and placed them in front of his tepee. From the time of this first unrecorded collector to the present, most thoughtful and reflective men have some time or other felt the spell of the past which the discovery of the fossil remains of extinct animals casts over the mind, and have become temporarily at least collectors of fossils. Even statesmen burdened with the affairs of nations have found time to collect fossils. It is related of Thomas Jefferson that when he journeyed on horseback from his Virginia home to Philadelphia to be inaugurated President of the United States, he carried with him in his saddle bags some fossils which he wished to submit to the Philadelphia savants.

From the rude mound of fossils so often met with in the farm-house front yard, or the mantlepiece collection in the mountain cabin, to the great collections of our large geological museums, is a long step, but the former may be regarded as the prototypes of the latter. The mantlepiece and front yard collections usually have slight value because no record of the exact locality of the several specimens has been preserved. The museum collection should show not only the geographical source of the fossils but their geological horizon as well. In other words the fossil exhibits of a properly arranged museum show the specimens in both their space and time relations. The fossil exhibits of large museums like the British Museum show the ancient life of the world in epitome. The educational value of the great museums of geology depends largely upon the extent to which the visitor has prepared himself to understand their message. There is no preparation for receiving the knowledge which museums and books on geology have

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