

retired altogether from public life. At his own manor-house at Chelsea he lived on to the great age of 93, when a brief illness terminated his life in the year 1753. He bequeathed his museum to the public on condition that 20,000*l.* should be paid to his family, the first cost of the whole having amounted to at least 50,000*l.* His books and manuscripts were included in this bequest, the former consisting of 50,000 volumes. The conditions offered by Sir Hans Sloane were responded to by Parliament, and his museum became the property of the nation. At the same time the Harleian Manuscripts were purchased by government, and the whole, with the Cottonian Library, which had been given for public use in the reign of William III., was formed into one general collection. A mansion in Great Russell-St., called Montagu House, was purchased of the Earl of Halifax, for 10,250*l.*; and between the years 1755 and 1759 the different collections were removed into it, the new institution being thenceforth called the *British Museum*. As the contents of the Museum became more multiplied, new steps were taken, as thus detailed in the Synopsis sanctioned by the trustees:—Till the arrival of the Egyptian Antiquities from Alexandria in 1801, Montagu House was competent to the reception of all its acquisitions. The Egyptian monuments, most of them of too massive a character for the floors of a private dwelling, first suggested the necessity of an additional building, rendered still more indispensable by the purchase of the Townley Marbles in 1805. A gallery adequate to the reception of both was completed in 1807, after which, although the trustees meditated, and had plans drawn for new buildings, none were undertaken till 1823, when, upon the donation from his Majesty King George IV. of the library collected by King George III., the government ordered drawings to be prepared for the erection of an entire new Museum, a portion of one wing of which was to be occupied by the recently-acquired library. This wing, on the eastern side of the then Museum garden, was finished in 1838; and the northern and a part of the western compartment of a projected square have been since completed. The principal floor of the northern portion is devoted to the general library, removed from the former house; that of the western, both below and above, to ancient sculpture and antiquities generally. A part of the lower floor of the eastern wing is devoted to the library of MSS. The upper floors, both of the eastern and northern sides of the square, contain the collections of Natural History. The new southern front of the Museum is at present in progress. The last remains of the original building was removed in 1845. The new buildings were designed by Sir Robert Smirke, and are entered by a massive portico, which was not completed till 1847.

Among all the antiquities for which the British Museum is famous, the most celebrated are the Elgin marbles, a collection of exquisite specimens of Grecian art, which have been the wonder and admiration of sculptors, and of all who have taste to appreciate their beauty, since the Earl of Elgin brought them to this country in 1801. These marbles adorned the Parthenon at Athens, a model of which building assists the visitor to understand the position once occupied by statues and bas-reliefs, now arranged in their mutilated state around the walls and on raised stages in what is called the *Elgin Saloon*. Marbles contemporary with these, found in the ruins of the Temple of Apollo Epicurius, near the ancient city of Phigalia, are arranged in the *Phigalian Saloon*. The Temple of Apollo was built by Ictinus, an architect of the time of Pericles, who also built the Parthenon. A series of tombs, bas-reliefs, and statues, of an earlier date than the Parthenon, were discovered in the ruined city of Xanthus, and brought to England by Sir Charles Fellows. These are called the *Xanthian* or *Lycian Marbles*. A series of very ancient and interesting marbles brought from the supposed site of Nineveh, on the left bank of the Tigris, have recently been added to the Museum through the zeal and laborious researches of Dr. Layard. A grand central saloon and several other rooms are devoted to remains of Greek and Roman art. Among these are forms of exquisite beauty, grace, and truth, which afford to modern sculptors and artists most valuable subjects for study. But perhaps the most popular part of the gallery of antiquities, to the great masses of visitors who crowd the Museum on holiday occasions, is that which contains the colossal sculptures of Egypt. These huge relics of an extraordinary people cannot fail to impress the beholder with wonder and curiosity. He longs to see the body to which that huge fist belonged, or the Sphinx which bore that immense but finely-wrought ram's head. The swarthy heroes of the Nile seem to look down on him with a calm sense of superiority; and as he views their colossal proportions, and looks around on ancient stone coffins, also of colossal size, he can hardly persuade himself but that there were giants in those days, and that these were the works of their hands. He might even go on to fancy that the insect world of Egypt presented the same exaggerated proportions, for here we find a beetle in dark granite of such a size that

a man cannot sit comfortably astride upon its back. This represents the sacred Scarabæus of Egypt. Another interesting and important object is the Rosetta stone, which first suggested to Dr. Thomas Young a mode of deciphering the mysterious inscriptions on Egyptian monuments. This stone bears the same inscription in three different characters, one in hieroglyphics, one in a written character called *enchorial*, and the third in Greek. Thus by means of the Greek inscription the hieroglyphics were for the first time rendered intelligible.

Besides the Egyptian Saloon, there is another collection of antiquities from Egypt in an upper room called the *Egyptian Room*. These consist of figures of various deities in silver, bronze, porcelain, wax, steatite, wood, &c.; various articles of household furniture; a collection of objects for dress and the toilet; a great number of vases, lamps, and miscellaneous articles; but above all in real interest, a large collection of human mummies, male and female, and also mummies of numerous animals, as the cat, dog headed baboon, bull, ram, sheep, lamb, ibis, crocodile, snake, &c.

Next the Egyptian Room is the Bronze Room, containing valuable Greek and Roman bronze figures, a collection of vases, terra cottas, &c. The celebrated Etruscan vases are in a separate room.

The Medal Room contains a large collection of coins and medals, of which Sir Hans Sloane's and Sir Robert Cotton's collections were the basis. Great additions have been made through the munificence of King George IV., and also by the bequests of the Rev. C. M. Crachero and R. P. Knight, Esq., and the gifts of Lady Banks and W. Marsden, Esq. It comprehends—1, Ancient Coins; 2, Modern Coins; 3, Medals. The Greek coins are arranged in geographical order, and include all those struck with Greek characters, in Greece or elsewhere, by kings, states, or cities, which were independent of the Romans.—With these are also placed the coins of free states and cities which made use of the Etruscan, Roman, Punic, Spanish, or other character. The Roman coins are placed, as far as it can be ascertained, in chronological order. The modern coins consist of Anglo-Saxon, English, Anglo-Gallic, Scotch and Irish coins, and likewise the coins of foreign nations. The coins of each country are kept separate.

The Zoological collection of the British Museum is a very fine one, and is contained in five rooms. The first room contains skulls of the larger mammalia, tubes of anulose animals, &c. The second room contains a collection of reptiles, &c., preserved dry and in spirits; a portion of the radiated animals, a variety of lizards, snakes, serpents, tortoises, crocodiles, batrachian animals, and star fish. The third room displays apes and monkeys in great variety, rats, beavers, squirrels, porcupines, rabbits, &c.; while the tables are covered with beautiful specimens of coral. The fourth room contains fish, insects, and crustaceous animals. The fifth, various forms of sponge and molluscous and radiated animals in spirits.

The mineralogical collection is very extensive and valuable, and affords admirable opportunities of study to the student of this branch of science. It is arranged in sixty cases, contained in four rooms in the North Gallery. The system followed is, with slight deviations, that of Berzelius, founded upon the electro-chemical theory of definite proportions, as developed by him in a memoir read before the Royal Academy of Science at Stockholm.

The collection of organic remains is not yet perfectly arranged. It commences with fossil vegetables. Then come the osseous remains of large reptiles, with some of the gigantic extinct species; then various mammalian remains. A complete skeleton of the large extinct elk of the Irish bogs, of the American mastodon, and other fossil wonders, occupy the fifth and sixth rooms of this collection, and at the west end of the latter is the fossil human skeleton, embedded in limestone, brought from Guadaloupe by the Hon. Sir A. Cochrane.

The Library of the British Museum contains about 500,000 volumes, and is visited by about 70,000 readers during each year. There are two spacious reading-rooms for their use (which are entered from Montague-St., Russell Square), where every accommodation is afforded in the pursuit of their studies. The access to these rooms, however, is to be sought by an application to the chief librarian, backed by a proper recommendation, and the ticket of admission has to be renewed half-yearly. No books are allowed to be taken away for perusal, and while the individual is using them in the library, he is responsible for their safety. This library ranks in importance with the best continental libraries, but the number of separate works is greater in Munich and Paris.

During the last three weeks the arrangements of the works of art in the gallery of sculptural antiquities have been completed. The Nineveh marbles are now entirely removed from the basement, and duly classified in the galleries especially constructed for their reception, where they are now to be seen to much advantage; several of the new rooms in this department of the Museum are now ready for the reception of works of art. The Lords of the Treasury have approved the project for the erection of a glass building, to cover the quadrangle, for a reading room, and as an addition to the printed book department; this arrangement will give room for half a million more volumes.