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ON THE FORMATION OF LOCAL COLLECTIONS.*

In reference to local collections and the study of local natural history, one of our older Essex County botanists said, at a field meeting of the Essex Institute many years ago, that "the careful study of the flora of a very limited area may well occupy a lifetime while the results would probably be of more value to science than any general work undertaken by the same student."

There is no better presentation of the need of local collections accessible to the public than the article by Prof. Edward S. Morse † entitled "If Public Libraries, why not Public Museums?" In this paper the author points out how many more public libraries there are in this country than museums and how much more difficult it is to install and maintain a library. And yet there is no doubt whatever regarding the great and in some cases even the greater educational value of the museum. Referring to museums open to the public he says:—"For New England, the fingers of one hand could almost count them, and for the rest of this great republic, the fingers of the other hand would be sufficient to keep tally." And this in contrast to European countries where nearly every large town has its public museum.

Nor have these conditions materially changed since the paper was written in 1893, although new museums have been

* A paper read at the Field Meeting of the Andover Natural History Society at "Alderbrook Farm," in Andover, Massachusetts, July the twentieth, nineteen hundred and four, by John Robinson, of the Peabody Museum in Salem.

† Atlantic Monthly, July, 1893, pp. 112-119.