

Plato has really nothing positive to say. He can show us the evils of perverted or sham education and statesmanship, and explain how beneficial the unperverted might be, but these unperverted forms he cannot show us. Of course Plato is in no worse case than anybody else; he labours under a defect of human thought. The history of Christian doctrine illustrates the difficulty. When a heresy has appeared, it becomes possible to say that the orthodox doctrine is not that; but until error has been formulated, truth is indefinable and even afterwards definable only by negation. Within certain restricted spheres of knowledge where errors are technical errors, they are avoided once they have been exposed as such, and in those spheres knowledge is cumulative and progressive. Elsewhere each generation is liable to be deceived by the old shams and commit some of the old errors.

If Plato is right and there is a hierarchy of the human arts or forms of productive knowledge, and if education and statesmanship are the highest of these, in virtue of determining the ends of life to which the subordinate arts supply means, then perversion seems inevitable. Only the subordinate arts expand and progress, and means are substituted for ends. The ship, to develop Plato's old simile, is never in the hands of a genuine pilot who knows how to take her into harbour, because there are no pilots. She is in the hands of people who suppose that since they know something about seamanship they understand pilotage too. One advises letting go the anchor, because when you are anchored you know where you are; another advises drifting with the tide, because Nature never errs or progress is inevitable; another recommends going full speed ahead, because speed can keep you off the rocks. As the anchor does not reach the bottom and the engines frequently break down, it is the second who generally has his way.

A. D. RITCHIE

HISTORY OF THE ZOOLOGICAL MUSEUM, COPENHAGEN

Zoologisk Museum i København gennem tre aarhundreder

Af Ragnar Spärek. Pp. 110. (København: Ejnar Munksgaard, 1945.) n.p.

THE histories of the important museums of Europe have followed the same general lines. They have had their origin in the 'cabinets of curiosities' formed by the aristocracy and the 'savants' during the late seventeenth or early eighteenth centuries. As their name implies, such 'cabinets of curiosities' included the most varied articles collected from all parts of the world through the help of travellers, ship's officers, Colonial officials and learned colleagues. It was mainly during the last half of the eighteenth century that many of these collections were obtained by the State or university, and the idea of public ownership of such collections became generally accepted. During the early nineteenth century, numerous museums were started by learned societies and institutions, but towards the middle of the century these small museums began gradually to be absorbed by the main museum. Local museums still have an important part to play, but in order to do good systematic work, important specimens must be

centralized in one museum with a good comprehensive library and a fully trained staff of experts.

The history of the Zoological Museum in Copenhagen is no exception to the general trend, and in this book Ragnar Spärek has traced its history from its origins in the collections of Ole Wormius formed between 1623 and 1625, the Royal "Kunstammer" and other private collections of the eighteenth century, to the modern up-to-date museum of the present day.

The history of an important zoological museum is of interest not only to the historian but also to the working systematist who is so often concerned with the origin or whereabouts of types and other important specimens. It is a pity that this book, being written in Danish, will not be available to many who would otherwise find it interesting to read and invaluable for reference.

Besides giving a detailed history of the collections at Copenhagen, there are many interesting biographical details of officials of the Museum and benefactors to the collections, and at the end of the book there is a chronological list of all who have been connected with the Museum during its long history.

BRITISH INSECTS

A Check List of British Insects

By George Sidney Kloet and Walter Douglas Hincks. Pp. lix + 496. (Heaton Chapel, Stockport: Kloet and Hincks, 1945.) 52s. 6d.

THIS work is an important contribution to the study of British insects; the need for such a catalogue has been felt for many years. It is curious that the earliest list of British insects was by a German named Johann Reinhold Forster, and was printed at Warrington in 1770. A photographic reproduction of the title page of this work forms the frontispiece in the present book. The last list of British insects was by the Rev. F. O. Morris and was published eighty-one years ago. It is so rare nowadays that Messrs. Kloet and Hincks mention being unable to see a copy.

It is difficult for anyone who is not a taxonomist to realize the practical difficulties and the critical abilities required to produce a list of more than 20,000 species of the insects native to Great Britain. Twice the Entomological Society of London has sponsored the task—the first effort was made in 1870 but died out after seven years. The second effort was started in 1934, and since that time it has only listed about one-twelfth of the fauna, although due allowance must be made for the intervening war years. Messrs. Kloet and Hincks' work is not a mere compilation but a genuine effort to clarify the taxonomy and nomenclature. Some 4,714 genera and 20,024 species of British insects are included, to which may be added a further 220 species which are doubtful or casual. In every case the name of the describer of each species is given along with the date: the same details are also given with respect to the chief subspecies, etc.

We express our admiration of this most useful list and all the self-sacrifice it has entailed to compile it. Our hope is that sufficient encouragement will be given to the authors to keep pace with modern developments and so to be able to issue a revision list when necessity demands it.