

Mines, the Normal School, the Polytechnic, the School of Fine Arts, the Pasteur Institute, the Central School and others, all engaged in a greater or less degree in imparting and advancing scientific knowledge, it will be seen that the provision for higher technical instruction in Paris is of the most satisfactory kind.

A. T. SIMMONS.

THE EXHIBITION OF RECENT ACQUISITIONS AT THE NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM.

IT has already become recognised that collections of objects intended to be exhibited to the general public should be presented in such a way as to enable the visitor to obtain some systematised information. This one takes to be the so-called educational side of the question. Museum curators, however, although by necessity extremely conservative, are beginning to find themselves in a position not very different from that of the popular lecturer or writer of the day. Unless these have something new to offer, be it only the method, so to speak, of marketing their wares, they will fail to arrest the attention which, when once directed in the sought-for way, may never again be lost.

The curator, it must be pointed out, is in a worse plight than the others, for the lecturer's audience is a varying one, and the writer can change his public; while the museum, as one is accustomed to it, is a fixture. Again, whereas the hearing of a lecture or enjoyment of an article usually presupposes some amount of expenditure upon the part of the hearer or reader, on the other hand most museums are free; and there is a good deal of truth in the saying that what is paid for is appreciated more than that which is had for nothing.

A little living interest must always be an advantage to a museum, and there seems some likelihood that Prof. Ray Lankester's infusing of some into the natural history side of the British Museum may mark the beginning of a new era there.

Possibly the new departure may be of more direct value to the general public, who only pays for the Museum, than to the specialists who use the building; but let us consider the matter in detail.

The arched recesses opening out of the entrance hall have hitherto been assigned to the index collections. These were intended as a biological introduction to the main groups represented in detail in the galleries, but they have never been absolutely completed. Recently, indeed, some of the specimens have been taken away, possibly to reappear in a more suitable position at the head of the series they elucidate. More to the point is the fact, that their place in the last alcove but one on the right-hand side is now taken by "specimens recently acquired."

The collection which first arrests attention illustrates the remarkable molluscan fauna of Lake Tanganyika. There are three series of shells, two of which show the freshwater molluscs of the general type which inhabit the African lakes, as illustrated by representatives from Lakes Nyassa and Tanganyika. The third consists of shells from the latter piece of water, which belong to the series called halolimnic, by Mr. J. E. S. Moore, who has done so much to add to our knowledge of the Tanganyikan fauna, and who has started this month upon a second expedition to the Great Lakes of Africa. This naturalist has shown that the shells in question are almost identical with well-known Jurassic forms, and the chief interest surrounding this exhibit is that in many cases, side by side with the examples collected by Mr. Moore, are their fossil representatives. This reminds one forcibly of the arbitrary line drawn in the arrangement of the Museum between fossil and recent

genera; but this by the way. As instances of the pairs of similar species might be quoted:

Tanganyika.	Jurassic.
<i>Chytra kirkii</i> .	<i>Onustus ornatisimus</i> , Burton Bradstock.
<i>Bathanalia irridesens</i> .	<i>Amberleya orbignyana</i> , near Yeovil.
<i>Pseudomelania damoni</i> .	<i>Purpurina bellona</i> , Bradford Abbas.
<i>Limnotrochus thomsoni</i> .	<i>Littorina dorsetensis</i> , near Yeovil.
<i>Melania admirabilis</i> .	<i>Cerithium subsalariforme</i> , Bradford Abbas.

Possibly the most striking exhibit is the collection of siliceous hexactinellid sponges dredged from Saguma Bay in Japan, and purchased by the Museum: many types and some of the finest examples yet known are among the number. They come from depths varying from 80 to 300 fathoms, and mention might be made of the fine *Euplectella imperialis* and *Rhabdocalyptus victor*, while the specimen of *Chaunoplectella cavernosa* is particularly beautiful.

The rare birds' skins presented by Dr. Moreno, the director of the Museum of La Plata, are as they were received. Indeed, it is rather agreeable to see exhibited in the Museum something which is not absolutely spick and span. An albino song-thrush from Argyll, presented by Colonel Edward Malcolin, finds a place by an example of one of the four recent species of *Pleurotomaria*, viz. *berichii*, all very rare and valuable, and the only living representatives of a genus once a thousand strong. The particular specimen contained the soft parts, and we are looking forward to an interesting paper based upon them from Mr. Martin Woodward, who gave a description of the radula to the Malacological Society the other day. A series of models illustrating the development of the chick within the egg attracted much attention on Easter Monday, as appertaining to something more or less familiar to the crowds whose acquaintance with oranges was even closer, judging from the heaps of peel not wholly left outside the building.

A formidable array of bottles contains a large collection of crustaceans exchanged with the Paris Museum, and chiefly obtained during the *Talisman* and *Travailleur* expeditions. Following close up, there is a second display of members of the same class from the Indian Museum. Lastly, must be mentioned several series of fish: one collected by Mr. Moore in the same lake as the shells; another representing a selection of the remarkable forms inhabiting the River Congo, presented by the Secretary of State for the Congo Free State, and recently described by Mr. G. A. Boulenger, with annals of the museum belonging to that republic. Many peculiarities of structure are to be met with; for instance, the curved snouts of the species belonging to the genus *Gnathonemus*, from which they take such names as *curvirostratus elephas* and *rhynchophorus*. The large teeth, too, of *Hydrocyon goliath* are most striking, fitting as they do between a pair of those in the opposite jaw, and coming to lie in deep grooves beyond their bases.

Two specimens of *Lepidosiren paradoxa*, sent by Mr. Graham Kerr from Paraguayan Chaco, complete the present list of the new exhibits.

Neglecting the actualities and possibilities of the Museum as a centre for research, it is primarily a storehouse in which everything, so far as space allows, is exhibited; a fact that enables the collector to name his specimens without unduly taking up the time of the staff. Secondly, the educational idea has been added to, but not combined with, this; while the popular interest will bear development, and it remains for the new director to work the various lines of usefulness into a well-balanced and harmonious whole. WILFRED MARK WEBB.