

THE POPULARISATION OF ETHNOLOGICAL MUSEUMS.

SPEAKING broadly, museums may be divided into two main classes, (1) those that are designed to interest and instruct the general public, and (2) those that are intended for specialists. Difficulties and misunderstandings arise when these two objects are not kept apart. The casual visitor is impressed, but scarcely edified, by long series of named specimens, and the specialist does not need popular descriptive labels, but he does require a large number of specimens. The problem that is now before most of our large museums is the conflict of these two interests. Probably the most satisfactory solution will be found in keeping these two classes of collections quite apart. Dr. F. A. Bather, in his suggestive and practical presidential address to the Museums Association (*Museums Journal*, vol. iii., 1903, pp. 71, 110), said, "the functions of museums are three: Investigation, Instruction and Inspiration appealing respectively to the Specialist, the Student, and the Man in the Street. These functions are so distinct that they are best carried out if museums, or the collections of a single museum, be classified on these lines. Such an arrangement is a saving of trouble and expense, and each division can thus be directly adapted to the class of visitors for which it is intended."

The specialist needs all the specimens he can get in a building where they can be safely housed and be readily accessible; he asks for facilities, not for architecture. If once this were fully realised a considerable amount of unnecessary expenditure could be saved. There are many objects that should be preserved for future generations which are neglected by museum curators because they cannot afford to store them, but there would be less excuse for this neglect if the cost of storage could be greatly reduced. At the Liverpool meeting of the British Association Prof. Flinders Petrie advocated the erection of a repository for preserving anthropological or other objects; an outline of his scheme was published in the *Report*, 1896, p. 935, and to the present writer it appears that something of the kind will have to be adopted by most countries, and the sooner this is done the better will it be for science, as objects that should be preserved are continually perishing or are discarded from lack of space in which to house them.

The general public provides most of the funds for the establishment and maintenance of museums, and it may very well insist on having something for its money that it can understand. A museum can be made into an institution of very great educational value without loss of attractiveness if some trouble be taken and if funds are available, and it is very probable that funds would be available if the results were such as could be appreciated by everyone. Our Natural History Museum at South Kensington has set a fine example of what can be accomplished in the way of well mounted birds in their natural surroundings. Probably lack of space and funds has prevented the authori-

ties of the Natural History Museum from constructing large groups of mammals similar to those which form such a splendid feature of the Field Columbian Museum of Chicago, and to a less degree of the American Museum of Natural History, New York.

The pleasure and instruction afforded by the realistic mounting of groups of animals are undoubtedly very great, and not less so are those caused by analogous ethnological groups. The present writer had his first interest in ethnology awakened by the excellent modelled groups of natives in the Crystal Palace, and the wonder and delight these gave to the small boy have never been forgotten. Various museums at home and abroad possess individual figures dressed in appropriate costumes, but it is again to the United States that we have to turn for the most effective development of this art. There are several first class groups of American natives in the American Museum of Natural History, others are to be found in the Field Columbian Museum; especially noteworthy in the latter museum are the groups illustrating the

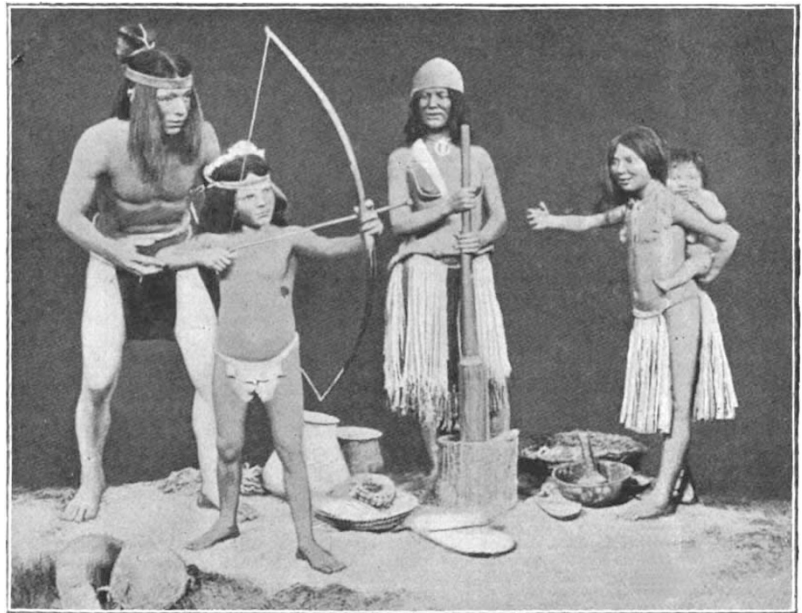


FIG. 1.—A Cocopa Indian family of the Sonoran ethnic province, Lower Colorado River, Mexico. They subsist largely by means of agriculture, feeding partly on game and fish, with various seeds, roots and fruits. They dwell in scattered settlements. The men wear skins and the women petticoats made of the inner bark of the willow.

rituals of the Hopi Pueblo Indians, to which the attention of the readers of NATURE was directed a short time ago (NATURE, vol. lxxvii., p. 392), and a wonderful case illustrating the domestic industries of the Hopi. It was once the writer's good fortune to be in the company of a couple of Navaho Indians who saw these models for the first time; they could not mask the interest they felt in seeing these representations of their neighbours, and great was their delight in noticing that the model of a particular woman, whose face they recognised, had, like her original, an amputated finger.

The high-water mark at present reached in this direction is in the dozen groups of lay figures designed by Prof. W. H. Holmes, and first exhibited in the Pan-American Exposition in Buffalo, 1901, to which reference has been made in these pages, and which are now in the National Museum at Washington. These groups present in the most striking manner possible a synopsis of the American aborigines, from the

Eskimo of North Greenland to the wild tribes of Tierra del Fuego. Each lay figure group comprises from four to seven individuals, selected to convey best an idea of the various members of a typical family. The activities of the people are illustrated, and the various products of industry are, so far as possible, brought together in consistent relations with the group. No one who has seen these splendid groups can doubt that this is the best way of illustrating the more salient features of ethnology, especially when these are supplemented, as in Prof. Holmes's scheme, with models made to scale of habitations and of boats, with a limited selection of objects made by the various people, and illustrations of their more important physical characters, such as crania, casts from life, and pictures. An exhibit such as this for all the more important groups of mankind would be of extreme interest and educational value, and would meet all the requirements of the public. If this arrangement were carried out the great bulk of ethnological material, which takes up so much space in large museums, need not be exhibited to the casual visitor.

There are two methods of constructing the lay

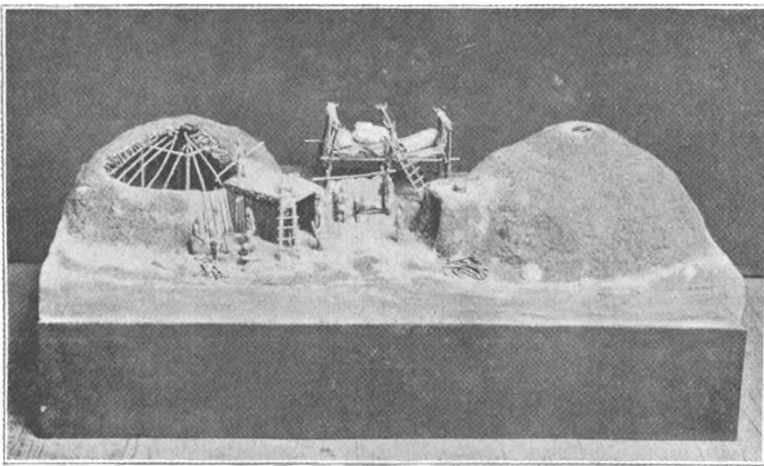


FIG. 2.—A dwelling group of the Pawnee Indians, a type of the Missouri Valley region. The Pawnee formerly lived in Nebraska. Although their home is in the country of the skin-tent dwellers, they continue to build the ancient northern type of earth-covered abode with slightly sunken floor.

figures of ethnological groups. The one is to make casts of actual individuals, and the other is to have effigies made by a sculptor. The Chicago groups are examples of the former method, but the Washington groups were made in the following manner:—"The sculptors were required to reproduce the physical type in each instance as accurately as the available drawing and photographs would permit. Especial effort was made to give a correct impression of the group as a whole, rather than to present portraits of individuals, which can be better presented in other ways. Life masks, as ordinarily taken, convey no clear notion of the people; the mask serves chiefly to misrepresent the native countenance and disposition; besides, the individual face is not necessarily a good type of a group. Good types may, however, be worked out by the skilful artist and sculptor, who alone can adequately present these little-understood people as they really are and with reasonable unity in pose and expression."

These groups and the other ethnological exhibits prepared under the direction of Prof. Holmes are figured and described in the annual report of the U.S. National Museum for 1901, published by the Smithsonian Institution in 1903. In the same volume will

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be found Prof. Holmes's views on the classification and arrangement of the exhibits of an anthropological museum. This essay, which will prove of considerable value to those concerned in this class of work, was previously published in the *Journal of the Anthropological Institute* (vol. xxxii. p. 353).

In his address Dr. Bather dealt mainly with art museums, but he alluded to folk museums, and Mr. Henry Balfour, in his recent presidential address to the Anthropological Institute, advocates the establishment of a national museum to illustrate the evolution of culture in our islands; he, like Dr. Bather, instances what is done in this respect in Scandinavia and Germany. Certainly this is much needed in our country, and immediate steps should be taken to realise it; already much has irrevocably been lost, as there was no institution that cared to preserve the relics of former conditions. In the same address Mr. Balfour gives some valuable suggestions for the arrangement of ethnological museums. Mr. Balfour's address will be printed in the forthcoming number of the *Journal of the Anthropological Institute*, and it will be found to be well worth perusal, as it embodies the long experience of a well-known expert in museum arrangement. It is to be hoped that the time may not be far distant when the educational value of properly arranged ethnological museums will be recognised in this country, and the means will be found to establish them.

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ROUND KANCHENJUNGA.¹

THIS work of Mr. Freshfield's on a tour round Kanchenjunga comes as a very welcome addition to the literature that deals with the great mountain peaks of the world. Kanchenjunga (28,150 feet) is the third highest measured peak on the earth's surface, Mount Everest being 29,002 feet, and K², in the Karakoram range north of Kashmir, 28,278 feet high. At present Mount Everest is hopelessly impossible of access, being in Nepal, a country entirely closed to Europeans; K² also lies so far removed from civilisation that it takes weeks of travelling, many days of it over glaciers, to arrive even at its base.

Kanchenjunga, however, can be seen from Darjeeling, and the view of the peak from that place is one of the grandest sights in the world. Kanchenjunga and its attendant peaks form a solitary group of mountains, which divides the province of Sikkim from eastern Nepal, and lies far south of the watershed of the Himalaya.

It is now many years since Sir Joseph Hooker in 1848-1850 made his famous journeys into the country round Kanchenjunga, and obtained leave from the Government of Nepal to travel in the Nepalese valleys on the west and south-west of Kanchenjunga. This leave has never been repeated, and it was not until Mr. Freshfield and his party descended the glaciers on the north of Kanchenjunga and trespassed in the Kanchen valley that Englishmen again set foot in this forbidden land.

¹ "Round Kanchenjunga; a Narrative of Mountain Travel and Exploration." By Douglas W. Freshfield. With Illustrations and Maps. (London: Edward Arnold, 1903.)