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To Advertisers.

The circulation of the SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN is from 25,000 to 30,000 copies per week larger than any other journal of the same class in the world. Indeed, there are but few papers whose weekly circulation equals that of the SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN, which establishes the fact now generally well known, that this journal is one of the very best advertising mediums in the country.

THE AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY.

The want of a public museum of natural history and of a zoological garden in the city of New York, has long been felt, and has been frequently discussed in our papers, but all of the efforts at remedying the defect, that have hitherto been tried, have failed for want of means. It is therefore with pleasure that we observe a new movement on the part of some of our enlightened and wealthy citizens to establish a museum in the Central Park, that shall recall many of the best features of similar European institutions, and be secured from political interference, by remaining the property of a private corporation.

The first annual report of "The American Museum of Natural History" has just been published, from which we gather some interesting facts.

It appears that in December, 1868, a number of gentlemen addressed a letter to the Commissioners of the Central Park, expressing their desire that a great museum of natural history should be established in the Park, and inquiring if the Commissioners were disposed to provide for its reception and development. A favorable answer having been received, steps were taken to obtain an act of incorporation, and to solicit subscriptions.

In a few weeks the sum of \$44,550 was secured, and the purchase of collections at once begun. A valuable suite of North American birds, containing over three thousand specimens, was procured of Mr. D. G. Elliot, and Mr. Bell, a distinguished taxidermist, was employed to mount them. The committee to whom the matter was referred, having heard that the collection of the late Prince Maximilian of Neuwied were for sale, at once requested Mr. Blodget and Mr. Elliot, who were traveling in Europe, to take measures to secure them. The price paid for the collection was £1,500 sterling, and it is now on its way to America. The collection consists of 4,000 mounted birds, 600 mounted mammals, and about 2,000 fishes and reptiles mounted and in alcohol.

The presence of Mr. Elliot in Europe has been of great importance to the Board of Trustees, as he is familiar with several departments of natural history, and can aid in making proper collections of objects to be purchased. He found a dealer in birds and animals in Paris, who had accumulated a vast collection of curiosities, and of him he secured specimens to supplement the collection of the Prince of Wied. This was much better than to purchase the whole collection, for which the price of \$45,000, gold, was asked. Of M. Verreaux, Mr. Blodget and Mr. Elliot secured 2,800 mounted birds, 220 mounted mammals, 400 mounted skeletons of mammals, birds, reptiles, and fishes, at a cost of \$16,000 in gold, and of M. Vedray 250 specimens of mounted mammals and Siberian birds have been purchased. In addition to the above, many valuable objects have been presented to the Society by Baron Osten-Sacken, Mr. Robinson, and others, and they have now a collection that when properly exposed, will be a great source of instruction and amusement to our citizens.

The temporary place of deposit assigned by the Commissioners of the Central Park for the collection is the upper

story of the Arsenal. The whole of this floor has been fitted up with cases, at the expense of the Commissioners, and the work of unpacking and arranging can now be rapidly carried on.

The trustees of the American Museum employ their own curators and pay them their salaries, but the police force and servants will be furnished by the Park authorities. The trustees of the Museum have the right to exhibit the collections in their own name, and we suppose for an entrance fee, three days of the week; all the rest of the time they will be open to the public free of charge.

Perhaps the most important clause in the agreement made between the Trustees and the Commissioners, is the one relating to the ownership of the collections. The Trustees have the right to remove their property upon giving six months' notice, and the Commissioners can require them to move the collections upon the same terms. In the event of the control of the Park passing into the hands of politicians, as it may easily do by act of Legislature, and of an attempt to make the Museum a source of speculation, the Trustees can withdraw their collections, and save them from falling a prey to these unprincipled men. The chief anxiety of thoughtful citizens has been to keep the educational facilities of the Park out of the hands of the city authorities, and it has been proposed to put the Zoological garden under the control of a private corporation for this purpose.

The recent unceremonious way in which the former Commissioners of the Central Park were legislated out of office is a fair illustration of what may be expected in the future. It is a pity that the Zoological Society was permitted to become extinct, as it could have occupied the grounds set apart for the garden, on the same terms as the Trustees of the Museum of Natural History now hold possession of the Arsenal, and in case of a change in the rules of the Park, the collection of live animals could have been saved from being sold or used as a source of profit to unplaced office seekers. As it is now, there is no guarantee that the Zoological garden may not be looked upon as a tempting field for a class of biped animals who have a keen scent for rich pastures where the work is light and the pay heavy.

The Trustees of the American Museum of Natural History close their report with an appeal to the public for further assistance; they say that the present subscription list of \$52,000 should be increased to at least \$100,000, and in this appeal they ought to have the sympathy and practical aid of our citizens. We also notice in this connection that the Legislature of the State of New York have changed the name of the State cabinet at Albany, and have put it under the direction of Professor James Hall. The Albany geological specimens are typical ones, and are of the utmost importance to the scientific men of the whole country, as they afford the key to the geological nomenclature of the United States. There is, therefore, great wisdom in carefully preserving them and intrusting them to the geologist who has given names to the groups of rocks in the State, and has done more than any other to illustrate and explain the relative position of American formations. The Legislature also authorized the presentation of duplicates to the American Museum of Natural History in New York.

THE DANGERS OF DRUGS.

The public mind has been much exercised of late by recitals of fatal mistakes of those whose business it is to deal out drugs and medicines; and our countrymen have been rather taught to believe that these mistakes were in a great degree attributable to the looseness of our laws and our want of system in this important regard; and that in other countries where a better system prevailed such mistakes rarely or never occur. There is some truth in this prevailing idea, and much might undoubtedly be done and should be done to prevent the recurrence of such accidents.

Indeed the public can hardly be aware of the disgraceful, and, in view of the possible consequences, alarming ignorance of many of those engaged in the retail drug business. We frequently receive letters (from the country of course), asking information relative to some of the most common substances, which the writers had been unable to obtain at their village drug store, simply because the articles had been inquired for by the technical or chemical name of the substance required. We this week received such a letter asking information as to *chloride of sodium*—common salt—and as to the bi-sulphide of carbon—the latter of course not so common as the former, but still a chemical with which every druggist should be familiar.

It is to be wondered at that when men, so deplorably ignorant of the very rudiments of knowledge necessary to their business, are intrusted with the dealing out of medicines, many of which, as everybody knows, are active poisons, fatal mistakes are frequent? In fact is it not rather a wonder that we are not more frequently called upon to chronicle such sad results?

That such mistakes, however, are possible in other countries than ours, is evidenced by the following case, reported in the *Chemist and Druggist*:

"An inquest was held at Pemberton, near Wigan, on the body of William Richardson, collier, aged 26, who had died on the previous Sunday immediately after taking a powder which he had obtained at the surgery of Messrs. Johnstone and Beaman, surgeons, Upholland. Mr. Peace, solicitor, appeared on behalf of Mr. Johnstone, who had dispensed the medicines, and stated that by an unfortunate mistake strychnia had been administered to the deceased instead of santonine. Mr. Johnstone had only recently entered upon the practice, and was not aware that any strychnia in a crystal state was in the surgery. The bottle was not labeled, and was in a cupboard in which the santonine was kept.—Mr.

George Warwick Johnstone, the surgeon who dispensed the medicine, gave evidence. He said he was not at the time aware that there was any strychnia in a crystal form in the surgery. The bottle was not labeled poison, and in several respects it resembled the one in which santonine was kept.—The verdict of the jury was to the effect that death had resulted from censurable oversight on the part of Mr. Johnstone, and that, in the opinion of the jury, great blame was attached to those who placed the bottle in the closet without a proper poison label."

Here we have an instance of gross carelessness, but in this country we fear carelessness and ignorance are often combined. There ought to be legal enactments that shall secure either carelessness or ignorance from tampering with human life.

Educated and competent chemists are now forced to compete with those who have not the first qualification for dispensing drugs. It was only last week that we sent a very plainly written prescription of an eminent practitioner of this city, copied under his supervision in plain, unmistakable handwriting, to a dyspeptic friend in the country. The prescription was returned with the message that the local druggist (sic) could not make it out; yet every drug was official, and to each the correct name, as found in the U. S. Dispensatory, was given.

The competent druggists of this country owe it to themselves, as well as to a too credulous public, that this evil shall be corrected. They should ask and press for the enactment of such a law as will forever exclude ignoramuses from their responsible profession.

STEAM BOILER INSPECTION.

In our issue of April 23d, we published an article upon Steam Boiler Inspection, which has called forth a communication from the steam boiler insurance company therein referred to. This company proves to be the Hartford Steam Boiler Inspection and Insurance Company, whose advertisement has often appeared in our columns.

This letter puts a somewhat different face upon the matter, and corrects a misapprehension derived from the statements of a Chicago paper upon which we based our remarks.

It seems that the company referred to had commenced business in Chicago before the inspection law was passed, and it was simply asked by the boiler owners who had insured and were under guaranteed inspection by the officials of the company, that they should be exempt from the inspection of the city officials. In other words, it is desired by the parties interested that the inspection of the company shall be accepted in lieu of the other, for all such boilers as are under regular inspection by the company. It was not asked that such boilers as are not under the supervision of the company should be inspected by them.

In this point of view we certainly see no injustice in exempting insured and regularly inspected boilers from other inspection. There is certainly the strongest guarantee that such inspection would be faithfully performed, namely, a pecuniary risk attending upon neglect.

We are informed that the company make their inspections quarterly, the inspection being done by salaried experts, whose positions depend upon the faithfulness with which their duties are performed.

Provision was made that if from any reason, for any boiler thus left in charge of the company and exempted from inspection by the city officials, the company should decline to continue a risk, or if the insured should decline to make necessary repairs, the company should at once report the same to the City Inspector so that no boiler might go uninspected.

We are told that although the post of City Inspector has been in several instances proffered to the company, it has been uniformly declined as conflicting with true business policy; and that the company neither ask nor desire any special legislation in their favor.

The plan proposed in Chicago was suggested by the steam users themselves, and in the light of our present information we see nothing objectionable in it.

The company further avow their belief in thorough inspection laws, and indorse our views as expressed in the article alluded to above, in regard to the payment of liberal salaries to competent men, and minute examination for defects.

We are, however, informed that in the experience of the company it has been found that the responsibility of city and State officials rests very lightly upon them, and that where there is no competing element their work is generally very much neglected, a statement which the great number of explosions constantly occurring seem to confirm.

As we said in our former article we believe the system of boiler insurance a good one, and regard it with hearty favor; and we are glad that we can thus, on official authority, make a disavowal of what we felt sure was calculated to greatly injure its usefulness.

MECHANICAL RECREATIONS.

The purpose of this article is to show that mechanical employments furnish the most healthful and delightful recreations for such as are not constantly employed in them.

The purpose of recreation is as the term implies to re-create or renew the exhausted energies of mind and body. Perfect rest, such as is secured by good, sound, refreshing sleep, is of all the means by which this is accomplished, the most powerful.

It is true food is the fuel by which the human engine runs and does work, but the analogy between a machine constructed of lifeless material and the animal economy ceases when we consider anything beyond the mechanical power of muscular movement derived from the consumption of food.

The human machine includes within itself a directing