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SOME PRINCIPLES OF MUSEUM ADMINISTRATION

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IN No. 641 of SCIENCE (April 12, 1907) Dr. George A. Dorsey discusses in some detail the installation of the ethnological collections in the American Museum of Natural History, basing his criticism essentially on the point of view that the arrangement is an unsatisfactory attempt at popularizing the results of ethnological research. In his discussion he assumes that the essential object of a large museum must be research, not instruction, without, however, discussing the validity of this fundamental assumption.

I may be allowed in the following remarks to discuss what seems to me the vital question of the uses of museums as research institutions and as educational institutions. Since my own practical experience has largely been gained in ethnographical museums, I may be allowed to take my examples particularly from these, indicating at the same time in what respects ethnological museums seem to differ from natural-history museums.

Museums may serve three objects. They may be institutions designed to furnish healthy entertainment, they may be intended for instruction and they may be intended for the promotion of research.

The value of the museum as a resort for popular entertainment must not be underrated, particularly in a large city, where every opportunity that is given to the people to employ their leisure time in healthy and stimulating surroundings