SCIENTIFIC EVENTS

FUTURE OF THE SCIENCE MUSEUM, LONDON

THE future of the Science Museum, South Kensington, is discussed in the report of the Advisory Council and summarized in the London *Times*. It is recalled that in the report last year the council gave a brief résumé of its recommendations for the future of the museum as an integral part of a general project for the development of the South Kensington site. They afterwards issued a full report, and subsequently Lord Stanhope, then president of the Board of Education, received a deputation of the council.

Lord Stanhope, the present report states, expressed his sympathy and agreement with the council's recommendations as to the floor space needed for exhibition galleries, library and ancillary accommodation. "He expressed his doubts, however, as to whether the site area . . . would be available in its entirety without jeopardizing the whole project, and suggested that it might be necessary to confine the museum to a smaller site and erect a loftier building with exhibition galleries on four more floors."

The Advisory Council have expressed their "profound concern" at such a policy. "They understand that the site area which they require for the Science Museum only affects the project to the extent of precluding the location of another new museum on this already crowded site, and that the project is based on a tentative plan prepared early in 1937 before the needs of certain institutions were known.

"They reaffirm their opinion that it is unwise to erect a museum with several stories of exhibition galleries. Two, or at the most three, such stories should be the maximum, for the public are averse voluntarily to mounting higher, and upper galleries remain unvisited mausoleums. The modern practice in museum buildings in other countries confirms our opinion."

The council considers that the site area they request for the Science Museum in the future falls short of the areas now occupied by the other major national museums. While maintaining its function of preserving historical records of science and industry, it should be in a position to serve a wider educational purpose in connection with the national industries.

EXPEDITIONS OF THE FIELD MUSEUM, CHICAGO

THE paleontological expedition of the Field Museum of Natural History, under the leadership of Assistant Curator Bryan Patterson, has begun operations in western Colorado. Mr. Patterson is accompanied by James H. Quinn, also of the department of geology, and a corps of volunteer workers will be recruited in the vicinity of the excavations.

The expedition will remain in the field for about three and a half months. The field of operations lies in Mesa, Garfield and Gunnison Counties, where an extensive series of formations belonging to various periods and eras in the earth's history is exposed. Important collections of fossil animals and notable additions to knowledge have already resulted from previous expeditions conducted in this general region during 1932, 1933 and 1937. This program will be continued by the present party, which will carry on work mainly in late Paleocene and early Eocene deposits (the opening epochs of the Age of Mammals), with some attention also being paid to the late Cretaceous formations (the closing period of the Age of Reptiles).

The main objective of the expedition is to collect fossil mammals from the Paleocene and Eocene. Specimens from these early horizons are of great interest to students of mammalian evolution. The dinosaurs and other reptiles that had previously dominated the earth were but a short time extinct (geologically speaking), and the mammals were just getting well under way. Many groups that no longer survive were flourishing, and several of the dominant mammalian types of the present time were represented by exceedingly primitive ancestors.

In addition to the work on vertebrates, attention will be paid to geological observations and to the collecting of fossil plants. It is hoped that by means of the latter it will be possible to make somewhat more precise age determinations and correlations of the late Cretaceous formations than has hitherto been done.

The expedition which has been collecting marine animals and other invertebrates along the Atlantic and Gulf coasts of Florida since early in May has completed its work. Dr. Fritz Haas, curator of lower invertebrates, and Staff Taxidermist Leon L. Walters, who conducted the expedition, have returned to the museum. More than 6,000 specimens, representing the most important features of the invertebrate life forms native to the region, were collected. On Sanibel Island, Dr. Haas conducted researches on the relationships between the various types of fauna and the environmental conditions in which they are found. He also investigated the rôle of molluscan life in building up land through the accumulation of shells.

One of the main objectives of the expedition was the collecting of material and data for a proposed habitat exhibit of the loggerhead turtle. This material was collected on Sanibel Island, and plaster molds were made which will form the basis for life-like reproductions. Mr. Walters was fortunate in being able to observe the entire nesting procedure.