

REPORTS

THE AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY¹

A GRATIFYING increase in visitor attendance and museum membership, the completion of many important exhibits, a splendid output of scientific publications and many additions to museum collections make 1941 a year of important progress. Merely to glance at the contributions of the scientific, educational and administrative departments to this annual report is to appreciate the extent and immense value of the work carried on in this institution.

Early in the year the trustees, through a Survey Committee, commenced an investigation into the museum, and this work will be carried on by the Plan and Scope Committee of the scientific staff. Important changes in trustee and staff organization are being made to enable the museum not only to move towards a definite plan of development but to operate more efficiently within its limited budget. In these changes one salient fact is recognized, that the scientific staff gives the museum its importance not only in the fields of natural science but in general public recognition. The great collections, the exhibits, the educational work in schools and colleges all alike must be based upon the highest scientific standard and knowledge, which can come only from the men and women who compose the scientific staff. Better to enable this group to work, freely to express itself, and to create, develop and carry out great museum plans is the important aim of the trustees. Our scientists fully realize that the "ivory tower" aspect of science is a thing of the past, and that the whole work and development of our institution must be integrated with the life of the community and the nation.

This nation is dedicated to the principle of enlightening its citizens—free minds, not closed minds—free search for knowledge, not propagandized thought. Our great museums are repositories for knowledge; they not only germinate free thought but minister to man's insatiable desire to know more about himself and the world. Museums are one of the important social agencies wherein man develops his spiritual outlook, and in the total war in which this country is engaged the spirit of a free people must be nourished.

Concerning the war effort it is interesting to learn that the scientific staff is uniquely qualified to provide information for various governmental agencies and invaluable data for our military and naval forces. Thus, the museum will provide vital information on parasites prevalent in war; the importance of insects in war; rodent disease carriers; the distribution and habits of, and safeguards against, poisonous snakes; illustrations of tests used to determine the fitness of soldiers; the war terrain of various parts of the globe which have been studied and visited in person by our scientists and explorers; descriptions of inhabitants and tribal customs, of flora and fauna; charts of ocean currents in the Caribbean and other waters, and other topics. Of aid to pilots and ocean navigators is our Hayden Planetarium course in celestial navigation. Research conducted by the museum in past years provides knowledge of marine products useful in war time as well as marine forms dangerous to shipping. Knowledge of nature's incomparable camouflage system is useful.

The department of education, in addition to greatly extending its service within the museum, is planning the creation of portable school museums to be circulated in the New York area, this work to be done in cooperation with other museums receiving city aid; establishment of "Hobby and Craft Development Centers"; establishment of "Community Museums"; integration of museum materials to illustrate various aspects of war areas; and organization of a radio series dealing with the relation of natural science to war.

Above all, the museum is a house of refuge from the stress of wartime existence and as such will continue to provide relaxation, enjoyment and inspiration for an ever increasing number of people.

On behalf of President F. Trubee Davison, who is on active war service, and the Board of Trustees, I wish to express our deepest appreciation to the many hundreds of people who have given generously of their time, effort and means to carry forward the work of the institution.

A. PERRY OSBORN,
First Vice-president

SPECIAL ARTICLES

THE RELATION BETWEEN NUCLEIC ACID AND GROWTH*

RECENT work employing isotopic techniques emphasizes that most tissue constituents undergo con-

tinuous synthesis and degradation. In view of the great biological stability of chromosomes in contrast to the variability of most other visible cell constituents, it is of interest to know whether their com-

¹ Annual report of the president to the trustees of the American Museum of Natural History and to the Municipal Authorities of the City of New York.

* This is reprint No. 553 of the Cancer Commission of Harvard University.