

ing letter signed by twenty-three distinguished naturalists:

The director of the British Museum (Natural History) is about to retire, and we learn with deep apprehension that the principal trustees, with whom the appointment rests, have received, or are about to receive, from the general body of trustees a recommendation to pass over the claims of scientific men and to appoint a lay official, who is at present assistant secretary. The former directors, Sir Richard Owen, Sir William Flower, and Sir Ray Lankester, like the present director, Sir Lazarus Fletcher, were all distinguished scientific men. The Natural History Museum is a scientific institution. There is a large staff of scientific keepers and assistants. The director has to represent natural history to the public, to other scientific institutions at home, in the dominions and colonies, and in foreign countries, and to the many government departments with which the museum has relations. He must represent it with knowledge and authority. There are few posts with such possibilities of advancing the natural history sciences, of making them useful to the nation and of interpreting them to the public. The existence of the post is a great stimulus to the zeal and ambition of zoologists and geologists.

The arguments alleged in favor of the recommendation are trivial. It is stated that a former director was allowed by the trustees to leave the administrative details to the member of the clerical staff whom it is proposed to promote, that he performed these duties with ability, and during the tenure of the present director retained and extended his powers. It is urged that the tenure of the new director would be short, as he would have to retire in two years under the age limit. It is pleaded that promotion would entitle him to a larger pension, and that he need not be called director, but only acting-director.

Plainly, if the assistant secretary be the only man who knows the details of administration, it is important that the permanent director should be appointed at once, in order to have the opportunity of learning them before taking them over. In actual fact there is nothing in the administrative work of the directorship that could not be learned in a few weeks or months by any person of ordinary intelligence. At least two of the present keepers are eligible for the vacancy, have attained the necessary scientific standing, and have ample experience of the museum itself. To pass over these or several eminent and eligible men not on the staff in favor of one of the ordinary office staff

would be an affront to scientific men and of grave detriment to science.

THE INYO RANGE AND THE MOUNT WHITNEY REGION

THE Inyo Range, the Mount Whitney region and Owens Valley, which lies between these two ranges, in eastern California, are described in a report just issued by the United States Geological Survey, as Professional Paper 110 by Adolf Knopf. This region is off the main lines of travel and is not so well known as other parts of the state, but when the roads and railway facilities are improved, Owens Valley, which affords the easiest access to the region, will certainly become famous for its magnificent scenery. The Sierra Nevada, which reaches its highest point in Mount Whitney, forms the west wall of Owens Valley, and as it rises abruptly above the valley without intervening foothills the range displays its majestic height far more imposingly here than anywhere else along its course. The top of the Sierra Nevada is readily accessible by trails that start from the pleasant towns of Lone Pine, Independence, Big Pine and Bishop. Good roads extend into the heart of the range from Bishop, the chief town in Owens Valley, so that an automobile trip of hardly more than an hour will take the traveler to the headwaters of Bishop Creek, whose profoundly glaciated canyons and spacious amphitheatres are among the most impressive in the entire range. The country west of the crest of this part of the Sierra Nevada is included in the proposed Roosevelt National Park.

The region is rich in mineral resources—silver, lead, zinc, tungsten, gold and marble—and the waters of Owens Lake yield soda and other chemicals. The mines at Cerro Gordo, in the Inyo Range, have produced more silver-lead ore than any other mine in California, their output of base bullion between 1869 and 1877 amounting to \$7,000,000. After those early flush times the mines long lay idle, but in recent years they have been reopened, and Cerro Gordo has again become California's foremost producer of lead ore.

In 1913 large bodies of tungsten ore were discovered in the Tungsten Hills, west of Bishop. They remained practically unknown until the spring of 1916, when outside interests bought them and began to develop them energetically. By midsummer two mills had been completed and were in active operation, and the district has since supplied a large quantity of tungsten. Geologic conditions similar to those in the Tungsten Hills prevail over a wide extent of country along the east slope of the Sierra Nevada. The places of contact of the intrusive granites with other rock, shown in the geologic maps accompanying the paper, are the most likely places to prospect for other similar bodies of tungsten ore.

THE JOURNAL OF "NATURAL HISTORY"

THE *Journal of the American Museum of Natural History* will hereafter be known as *Natural History*, being edited as hitherto by Miss Mary Cynthia Dickerson, curator of woods and forestry. The change is announced as follows:

Attention is called to the change in title of this magazine from *American Museum Journal* to the old, honorable and historical name *Natural History*. A change has been contemplated for two years or more, partly to avoid confusion with other publications known as "Museum Journals" and partly because the magazine for these years has not restricted itself to a consideration of the American Museum's work and interests. As expressed many times by the editor in letters to contributors, the magazine would like to feel that it stands as a medium of expression between authoritative science in America and the people, a place for publication of readable articles on the results of the scientific research and thought of the nation for people who are not technically trained. These people have neither time nor desire to pore over technical, unreadable articles, but nevertheless are intelligently, practically and often profoundly interested. *Natural History* would like to stand for the highest type of authoritative natural history, expressed by the investigators themselves, by explorers, by the accurate observers in laboratory or field. In addition it desires to interpret the technical publications of our scientific thinkers, if not by popular articles by the same authors, then through reviews by other well-known scientific thinkers, these "re-

views" being, as suggested, readable discussions of the given subject apropos of the technical work. It would also of course report phases of the educational work being accomplished by the scientific departments of the United States government and by the various scientific institutions of the country, especially those of the museum type.

There has been so much shallow, inaccurate, "popular" science, nature study and natural history, written by persons untrained in science and with distorted imaginations, that a prejudice still remains in the minds of some scientists against putting their observations and conclusions, even when of great value for the layman, into readable form. But the time of such suspicion and condemnation against the mere form of expression of an idea is well-nigh past, and the greatest scientific men of the country are daily proving their willingness and desire to write in a way to be understood not only by the trained technical man, but also by the man with no knowledge of the shorthand of the scientific vocabulary.

We need especially to have a knowledge of nature and science to-day. The day of necessity has come for conservation of the world's natural resources and preservation of animals fast becoming extinct; there is seen approaching the time of conscious control of evolution; and just ordinary culture demands in the present decade knowledge of science in addition to what it has always demanded in literature, music and art. And these reasons do not take account of the added joy in life that comes from a knowledge of nature. We people of to-day need to know the book of the earth, to study it as a Bible, feeling the divinity in it. *Natural History* hopes to meet this need in part.

DEGREES IN PUBLIC HEALTH

IN view of the importance of arriving at some measure of standardization for the various degrees and certificates offered in the field of public health, Yale University invited a group of representatives from neighboring universities to confer in regard to the matter at New Haven on February 28, 1919. Johns Hopkins University was represented by Dr. W. H. Welch, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology by Professor W. T. Sedgwick, Harvard University by Dr. M. J. Rosenau, New York University by W. H. Park, and the University of Pennsylvania by Dr. H. F. Smyth; while Yale University was repre-