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Museum : Salford.

Myres.

Notes on the Ethnographical Collections of the Royal Museum, Peel Park, Salford. By John L. Myres, M.A., F.S.A., Secretary of the
Anthropological Institute.

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It is a noteworthy symptom of the growing importance which is attached to the study of Man and his works, that so many of our provincial museums have recently undertaken the rearrangement of their ethnographical collections on systematic and educational lines. And the movement is matter for congratulation from the point of view of the expert student also ; for it not infrequently happens that local museums are the fortunate possessors of rare and valuable objects which have come to them in chance fashion in times past, but have been practically lost to knowledge because they failed to fit into any recognised department of exhibition-space.

Both the Committee, therefore, and the Curator of the Salford Museum have deserved well of ethnologists in respect of the recent rearrangement of the ethnological specimens under their care. They have a considerable quantity of valuable material ; they have now allotted a proportionately adequate space to its display ; and they have adopted a mode of arrangement which combines, in a compact series, the advantages of more than one system of classification.

The Salford Royal Museum was opened in the year 1850, and contains besides the ethnographical collection now to be described, a library, picture and sculpture gallery, and a small museum of natural history. The early date of its foundation will perhaps explain the fact that its ethnographic collection in particular contains so many specimens which have since become rare, or even impossible to procure. The more recent additions—which are numerous and important—are the outcome partly of limited expenditure on the part of the Committee, partly of donations and deposits by public-spirited neighbours. The new ethnographic gallery is 75 ft. long by 28 ft. wide, top lighted, with a double row of double-fronted cases standing free down the middle of the room, and occasional table cases and wall cases round the sides. The standing-cases are well designed and of sound workmanship—about 7 ft. high, nearly 7 ft. long, and about 4 ft. wide. Each face, therefore, forms a compartment not too large to be studied as a whole, but at the same time capable of sub-division if required. Down the middle of each case is a moveable screen, fitted with Tonk's bars and brackets, so that shelves can be used, or not, as the contents may require. A good deal more case-room could be supplied without overcrowding the gallery ; and if this were done it would, perhaps, be possible to disburden some of the more crowded sections, and also to make the sections run in their proper sequence as described below, which they do not quite do at present.

The arrangement of the collection itself shows thought, and some ingenuity in making the most of what must have been, at the outset, a rather miscellaneous assemblage. At the nearer end of the room, an introductory case exhibits a representative collection of implements of flint and bone of Palæolithic Age, followed by a series of objects of Neolithic, Bronze, and Early Iron Age. The latter deserve more space and fuller treatment, if they are to serve, as seems intended, as an introduction to the ethnology and culture-history of Europe. In default of actual specimens something might easily be done with the help of casts, or even of typical photographs : the latter is a mode of filling vacancies in an educational series, which is not at all so widely used in local museums as it ought to be.

Then, coming nearer home, follows a British series of considerable interest, which illustrates the successive phases in the life-history of this country from the late Celtic and Roman periods onwards ; and at this point the small and rather miscellaneous collection of Greek and Roman pottery, glass, and bronze is brought in to illustrate, even if only in its elements, that Mediterranean culture, whose advent in the north

marks the beginning of the modern European world. This, in an ethnological museum, seems only right and appropriate, but I do not remember to have seen "classical antiquities" thrown into their true setting in this fashion before.

It is curious to find, in a remote local collection, and classified rightly but vaguely as of Mediterranean origin, a very fine example of the pre-Mycenæan stage of Ægean pottery, with an incised pictograph on its surface, to which, by the courtesy of the Curator, I am permitted to give a separate note before long.

The archæological series, described above, is evidently intended to serve as a kind of general introduction to the more strictly ethnographical collection which occupies the remainder of the gallery, and at this point the inevitable question has had to be faced: "On what system should the museum be arranged?" In a large and representative collection a geographical system is, of course, essential, but anyone who has passed through the ethnographic galleries of a great national museum knows how sadly un instructive such a grouping of material may be, and in a small museum it has the further serious drawback that its gaps are often more conspicuous than the specimens. What, for instance, is to be done with a series from Fiji, which, as at Salford, consisted originally of a spear and a hair-comb only? In a small collection equally, on the other hand, the alternative arrangement, by ethnographic types (as in the Pitt-Rivers Museum at Oxford), is liable to the same defect, and involves, moreover, a very serious burden of cross reference.

At Salford an ingenious compromise has been effected. Excluding Europe (which in its pre-civilised stages has been covered by the archæological series already mentioned), the surface of the earth has been subdivided into six main divisions, Africa, North America, South America, Polynesia, Australasia, Asia, and in these main divisions the specimens have been classified under the following ethnographic heads: Arts of Life, Arts of Pleasure, War and Chase, Spirit World and Religion, Domestic Economy, Personal Economy, and Transport and Carriage. Within these classes the sub-headings are geographical again, and refer to the minor districts into which the primary areas of the earth's surface are divided. By this arrangement the Fijian spear, for example, finds itself in company with other spears, and weapons of "war and chase" from Polynesia, while the hair-comb is found not far off among the "personal economy" of the same general region. Thus the student finds equal facilities awaiting him whether he approaches the study of ethnography from the side of geographical distribution or from an ethnological standpoint. Another advantage is that it is possible to compare the war axes, the ornaments, the pipes, or the musical instruments of one people or group of peoples with those of another, while at the same time the objects from any one portion of the world are so close together that it is possible to study the civilisation of the inhabitants of any district as a whole. That for practical purposes these half geographical, half ethnographical classes are sufficient is shown by the fact that each of the many thousands of objects comprised in the Salford collections has found a suitable place in them.

Pending publication of a catalogue of the collections in their new order, the descriptive matter contained in the old ethnographical catalogue has been utilised for the production of a series of descriptive labels, which are mounted and exhibited among the specimens.

J. L. MYRES.

Egypt.

Garstang.

A Pre-dynastic Pot-kiln recently discovered at Mahâsna, in 29 Egypt. By John Garstang, B.A.

An interesting pottery-kiln was found in course of excavation of a pre-dynastic settlement (S. 1) at Mahâsna in the spring of this year. The excavations were made for the Egyptian Research Account, for which fund a more complete report is in