

12 Park Lane - W.

October 15th

My dear Spencer -

I was very glad to get your letter of June 23rd - but unable owing to holidays & travels abroad to answer it before now. I am sure you will be a first-rate Director of the Museum & congratulate you on this addition to your sphere of operations. I have thought a great deal about Natural History Museums lately & am anxious to tell you one or two of my conclusions. Firstly - a national or State Museum has peculiar functions of its own - distinct from those of an educational or University Museum. The State Museum

may comprise under its roof
an academic collection - but
its first & distinctive purpose
is - "The procuring & preservation
of the objects of natural-history
& significance which are to be
obtained in the national territory"
"These are to be preserved in
" the first place for the study
" of scientific experts; in the
" second place, so far as is con-
" -venient - they are to be avail-
" -able for the instruction and
" edification of the public"

I want to insist that the teaching
of comparative or zoology or
other science - by means of series
& dissections etc. has nothing
to do with this. It is a separate
& distinct aim.

Also note - the procuring (i.e. sending
trained collectors & skilled masons to

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is the business of the Museum - also
the proper preservation of the
specimens - & that too in large
quantity. But the study and
description of the collections
is not a necessary & prime part
of the Museum's business. The
Museum says to experts, "Here
are the collections: Come & work
them out." The Museum can
organize this - but it can not
undertake by its own staff
to describe every kind of natural
product. The error has been
made of trying to do this. It can't
be done. You don't want a complete
staff of experts. A really complete
staff would - (it is fairly estimated)
number about 250 highly
educated men! of whom 150 alone
would be sutonologists. The
Museum then collected & preserved,

† by outside assistance of specialists - voluntary or paid - gets its collections evaluated - named - dealt with as scientific material. Such a State Museum is a sort of Record Office where the state documents of natural history are preserved.

† a totally different thing is an Educational Museum where the aim is to instruct either the larger public or University students - in zoology, botany, geology, mineralogy, etc.

By confusing these with the former - you may get landed in great trouble. Educationalists are rampant & exacting sort of people - often blind to the real interests of knowledge. Hence whenever possible - one should set up the standard of pure

Knowledge - & leave the
educationalists to manage
their own business - elsewhere.

You may be forced by educationalists
- if you give way at all - to
employ your space & your
money - in setting out series
of bones & viscera etc. with large
labels so as to hypnotize the
gaping public - The public will
think itself very learned for
reading the blessed word "meso-
potamia" under some fragments
of bone - but really no good
is done. Whereas the exhibition
of magnificent specimens of
Australian fossils - minerals -
corals - birds - without much
more 'science' than a detailed
account of the individual species
- is really more exciting to
the Australian public and

more likely to lead to enthusiasm
for exploration & research
in their own country.

Of course in England one is
not easily able to 'limit' the
national territory, and has
to follow the passed tradition
by taking in everything &
every part of the globe.

At the same time, I believe -

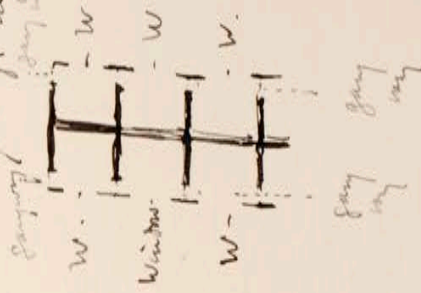
that at the B. M. Nat. Hist.

we ought not to try to teach
systematic zoology nor compare
anatomy - but to procure
& preserve the 'records' of the
natural history of the world,
& to exhibit them (when space
& their safety permits) in such
a way as to excite interest
in the thing itself - as a record
of outer 'nature' - not spending

time, trouble & money on
great & wearisome series
of a logical expository
character.

I have given a great deal
of attention to the proper sort
of building for Museums -
My conclusions may be
epitomized thus - The Museum
should consist essentially of
wind chambers - 25 ft by 25 ft

by 20 ft high, arranged thus -
back to back - with
windows facing the
backs. The windows
should start 6 ft from
the ground & run up
to 20 ft - so as to light
the back & sides.



The gallery should
be on the window
side - double case (sloped)
under the windows. The
The units can where necessary be

run two into one - but this should only be done where necessary.

No wall case should be more than 8 ft high. Such units are objected to as rendering police supervision difficult. To remedy this a gallery can be run along the mid-line (back) and a guardian kept on duty there. Large halls are an utter mistake: and only to be regarded as anti-chambers to the real series of exhibition rooms.

All small objects should be exhibited in slope-back cases - whose bottom line is 2 feet from the ground and top line 6 feet ditto (at most).

As to Diprotodon - I shall be quite content if Stirling will furnish me with the means of making a composite cast - in which some

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pieces are even restorations.

I hope he will do this.

// Another matter on which I am anxious to write you is that of your vacant chair of Geology & Mineralogy.

Dr. J. W. Gregory of the Museum is a candidate. I should be extremely sorry to lose him - but I must say he is entitled to a better post than he can hope for at the B. M. He is a really gifted - energetic - modest admirable man. If you care to recruit your staff - & to bring in new blood from home - this is really a great opportunity.

I assure you in all sincerity

that Gregory is not a second
rate man whom people
at home are glad to send
off to a colonial post. He
is - as you yourself were -
one of our best. He ought
to be kept here. But you
ought to grasp him. I
fully believe in the principle
of developing your own
men. & unless there were
a special opportunity of
securing a remarkable
man - I should think
you were right to promote
one of your own staff. But
this is an exceptional
case. Gregory is a splendid
man - full of resource -
enthusiasm. Knowledge

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& toughness. Have you read
his book on his expedition
to the Great Rift Valley?
I write as strongly as I
can - because I think it
preposterous that a man
of Gregory's splendid quality
should be shut up in a
back room at my Museum
naming fossil Beyozoa -
It is a duty to give this
man the freest & largest
scope. I did all I could
to get Gregory in to the
Professorship of Geology at
Oxford. I was on the
board & nearly succeeded
- I was dished by that
old rascal Odling - who
as Prof. of Chemistry ought

never to have been on the
board at all!

I believe I have never
thanked you for your book
on the Australian natives.
It is a wonderful account
& clearly of the highest
value. Pray write to
me whenever I can
be of service to you in
any way - & write
also when there is
nothing of the sort.

Yours sincerely

May Langhorne.

P.S. Barclay Thompson has married
the widow of W. Gilbert Child of Oxford.