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	PAGE		PAGE
<i>Industrial Museums.</i> B. V. NARAYANA-SWAMY .. .. .	1	<i>Obituaries:</i>	
'Ascu' Wood Preservative .. .. .	3	P. V. Mayuranathan .. .. .	38
Robert Andrews Millikan. J. M. BENADE	4	V. N. Ranganatha Rao .. .. .	39
Professor L. Ruzicka. J. N. RAY .. .. .	5	<i>Centenaries.—</i>	
<i>The Seventh International Congress of Genetics.</i> B. R. S. .. .. .	9	Baker, George (1540-1600) .. .. .	40
<i>The Anatolian Earthquake of December 27, 1939.</i> BY A. R. PILLAI AND M. R. RANGASWAMI .. .. .	10	Walter, Thomas (1740-1789) .. .. .	40
<i>Crystal Physics and Chemistry.</i> T. M. K. NEDUNGADI .. .. .	12	Haygarth, John (1740-1822) .. .. .	40
<i>A National Research Council for India</i> .. .. .	13	Cleland, James (1770-1840) .. .. .	40
<i>Letters to the Editor</i> .. .. .	14	<i>Astronomical Notes</i> .. .. .	41
<i>Reviews</i> .. .. .	31	<i>Magnetic Notes for December 1939</i> .. .. .	41
<i>The Central Board of Irrigation in India</i> .. .. .	37	<i>Science Notes and News</i> .. .. .	42
		<i>Academies and Societies</i> .. .. .	46
		<i>Supplement to Current Science—The Deccan Traps: An Episode of the Tertiary Era (Presidential Address, Indian Science Congress, Madras, 1940)</i> .. .. .	47

## INDUSTRIAL MUSEUMS

THE meaning of the word 'Museum' is 'temple of the Muses'. It denoted different things at different periods in history. Even libraries and places of literary study were once called 'museums'. The conception that it is a depository of curiosities and rarities is comparatively of recent origin. In Western countries, the period of explorations created and encouraged a great thirst in peoples' minds for the collection of beautiful and interesting objects from several corners of the world newly opened to them. One finds in the 17th century European princes, aristocrats, scholars and even clergymen keeping 'museums' as a mark of dignity and cultural superiority. During the 19th century the museum was no longer considered merely as a means of gratification to the aristocracy of rank and scholarship, but it

was raised to the status of an important public institution meant to serve as a laboratory of research and an educational centre.

To-day every European country possesses museums which originated in the art collections of mediæval princes and nobles. Finding the enormous educational possibilities of the museum various governments have been following a consistent policy of encouraging, equipping and popularising the institution. The study of natural science was greatly facilitated by the collections of stones, plants, insects, animals, birds, etc., and the art pieces gathered and exhibited in the museum roused the creative spirit of European artists. The rapid increase in the number of museums in Europe and elsewhere bear ample testimony to their importance in modern society. It suggests

that a country that aspires to progress on modern lines will find in the museum not an instrument of negligible value but an institution necessary for the education and the enlightenment of the masses and the classes.

It is not an accident that the greater the industrialisation in a country, the more numerous are the museums organised. There are about 8,000 museums in the world to-day and about 6,500 of them are concentrated in the highly industrialised countries of Europe and in the U.S.A. The leading countries in industrial and scientific progress,—the United States and Germany—can boast of more than 1,500 museums each, while France and Britain maintain 1,200. Italy has 400 to her credit and the giant engine of Soviet educational propaganda makes use of 200 well-kept museums for the propagation of the principles of communism and for the instruction in the industrial arts. Imperial Japan is quick in imitating the West and she has rapidly developed 160 museums while the vast area of yellow China has only about 100 institutions. Taking the British Empire into consideration we find the figures are as follows:—Australia and New Zealand 160; South Africa 60; Canada 125. Against the background of European countries and the British Empire the fact that India possesses only 105 museums must be a matter of regret for those who are interested in the all-round progress of our country.

Museums are of different types: art museums, science museums, etc. But India requires institutions specially devoted to the dissemination of knowledge in crafts and industries, both of the past and the present. In other words, India requires the 'Industrial Museum' more than any other type. She is on the threshold of industrial advancement

and the industrialisation of the country calls for a very large number of museums where the average citizen may learn, at first hand, about the growth and possibilities of village industries and crafts, new mechanical devices, new products, etc. He must see in the exhibits before him the past glory of our industries, and their present decay. He will then feel it his duty to encourage national industries. His pride in our industrial past would generate a noble feeling of well-directed patriotism without which democracy is impossible. The Industrial Museum is a depository, not only of the past industries, but also of the present growing industries and crafts. It must stimulate the curiosity of the public and awaken the average man so that he may know, and wish to know, more about the world in which he lives. The visitor should be impressed by means of exhibits and explanations how our own country produces a hundred good things which he blindly purchases from the foreigner, and how the dying and dead crafts can be resuscitated only if he is an intelligent and patriotic purchaser in the market. I am sure that there are thousands of educated people who purchase foreign products just because they are not aware of the progress in indigenous manufacture. If those men and women are attracted to the industrial museum, is there any doubt that the cause of *Swadeshi* would be well served? Many do not know the processes in the manufacture of articles they buy and use. A visit to the museum will enlighten them and increase the craving for further development. In recent years we hear politicians raising the slogan, "Go back to villages". How useful would industrial museums be in the attempt at educating the artisans and the peasants of the villages in

the simple crafts and rural industries so that their standard of living may be slowly, but surely, raised! The Wardha Scheme of Education aims at giving our school-boys instruction in useful crafts and industries. Gandhiji's scheme may be well served by the institution of industrial museums all over our country, in important centres, so that school children may be taken to the museums regularly—as they do in the United States of America and in Soviet Russia—and there taught the principles and processes of the manufacture of the articles in daily use.

At present, for a population of 350 millions spread over two million square miles, we have only 105 museums and very few of them are specially devoted to the industries. Even many of our cities are without any industrial museums. Recently there is a healthy trend towards the establishment of industrial museums in our important cities. The part played by the Congress and other national organisations in establishing technological museums deserves our praise. But one should remember that in the absence of generous help from the Government, the responsibility of encouraging industrial museums rests largely with the public. We hope that our Universities, municipalities and other public bodies would come forward in organising well-equipped museums for the rapid industrial, educational and cultural progress of India.

B. V. NARAYANASWAMY.

### 'ASCU' WOOD PRESERVATIVE

PENDING clarification of these and other obscure points the Forest Research Institute has decided to withdraw its publication, 'Ascu'—A wood preservative, *Indian*

*Forest Records* (New Series), *Utilisation*, Vol. I, No. 6, and to postpone its re-issue in a revised form until the results of further research and adequate service tests are available." This announcement is contained in a note issued by the Forest Research Institute, Dehra Dun, under the signature of Mr. L. Mason, President of the Institute.

This very unusual procedure of formally withdrawing a scientific publication originally issued under official authority raises a number of points which are not rendered any simpler by the fact that the process in question is covered by a patent which has been commercially exploited in India and, it is learnt is under active consideration even outside. When reviewing the publication 'Ascu'—*A Wood Preservative* (*Curr. Sci.*, 7, No. 3, p. 141), attention was drawn, in particular to two facts; first on the mass of data and a century of experience which the older creosote and zinc chloride processes had behind them and which 'Ascu' on account of its infancy could not possibly have, and secondly, on the lack of a bibliography of relevant literature in the publication. And although the Foreword to the *Record*, explicitly warned that it was "too early to pronounce a definite or final opinion on its merits or limitations", it must be confessed that this withdrawal was entirely unexpected. The Forest Research Institute took on itself a heavy responsibility in originally recommending the process and sponsoring the official publication and its responsibility is no less onerous in withdrawing its official *imprimatur* now after more than six years. It is not merely the future of a particular process that is involved now; it is the future of a pioneer industry still in the nascent stage. Public acceptance in India of wood preservation processes as such, is definitely hampered by these unfortunate developments relating to 'Ascu'.