

# THE MUSEUM JOURNAL

Vol. V

PHILADELPHIA, DECEMBER, 1914

No. 4

## THE YEAR AT THE MUSEUM

THE chief event that marks the history of the Museum during 1914 is the successful completion of the building operations begun in 1913. Although the new section is not ready for occupation at the close of the year, it is so nearly complete that a correct idea may be formed of it. In its beauty of design and in practical fitness for the purposes of the Museum, the new wing at once commands attention, for the achievement of the architects is one which combines great distinction in form and color with a close correspondence between the design and the functions of the building.

It is too soon to speak of the exhibits that will be installed in the Rotunda, which is the principal feature of the new exhibition halls. This installation will be one of the tasks of the year upon which we are entering. We can however take stock of the collections that have been acquired during the past year. The most important step taken in this increase of the collections is the start made to assemble an exhibition of East Asiatic art. During the preceding year a few first-rate bronze statues and other religious objects from Tibet were acquired. This beginning was followed in the spring of 1914 by the acquisition of the Alexander Scott collection, which has enabled the Museum to install an exhibition of the art of India, Tibet and Nepal.

Among the more important purchases made during the year, the place of honor must be given to a Chinese statue in glazed pottery, an object which ranks very high in the world of art and which has the greatest importance in relation to the history of Chinese sculpture. This statue, together with a number of early bronzes and

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FIG. 92.—Detail of Buddhist Temple Scroll shown in Fig. 93.

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FIG. 93.—Buddhist Temple Scroll.  
(Gift of Mrs. John L. Le Conte and Dr. Robert G.  
Le Conte.)

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jades purchased during the year, makes a very satisfactory basis for building up a collection which will illustrate the historical development of Chinese culture.

In other directions, and especially in the collections which have had a considerable period of growth in the Museum, like those illustrating the native arts and industries of the Pacific Islands, important advances have been made. A single instance will serve for illustration. The instance referred to is the purchase of a collection obtained from the Bagobo tribe of southern Mindanao in the Philippines. It comprises over two thousand specimens and includes numerous examples of the beautiful weavings and embroideries of that tribe, as well as their weapons and utensils, personal ornaments and objects related to their religious and social practices. Although this particular collection is distinguished among the year's acquisitions for its completeness in illustrating the tribal life and the tribal genius of the Bagobos, other collections of similar importance have been obtained from other parts of the Pacific, as well as from African tribes and from various tribes of North American Indians.

While the increase of the collections has thus been effected chiefly through purchase, special interest attaches to those which have come from expeditions in the field. From the South American expedition, which has worked throughout the year in the Amazon Valley, extensive collections have been received, representing different tribes, some of whom had not hitherto been visited or made known to the world. The work of the Amazon Expedition has proved to be eminently satisfactory, not only in the collections obtained, but in the scientific data which have been gathered by Dr. Farabee during his studies of the several peoples among whom he has sojourned during the last eighteen months. The work which Dr. Farabee has accomplished in the jungles of the southern Guianas, even if we consider it only in the light of physical difficulties overcome, makes a record of tropical exploration that has few parallels, and that ranks among the best achievements of modern explorers.

In March the Museum in conjunction with Oxford University and the academies of Moscow and St. Petersburg sent an expedition to northern Siberia for the purpose of studying the little known tribes that inhabit the tundras of that region. The difficulties which attend the work of this expedition are very great even under normal conditions. While this work is not likely to be in any way



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FIG. 94.—Illuminated Painting of Avalokitesvara.  
(Gift of Mrs. John L. Le Conte and Dr. Robert G. Le Conte.)

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impeded by the fact that Russia is at war, communication with civilization will thereby be rendered more difficult for the expedition and its hardships will be increased accordingly. The Siberian expedition, which was last heard from in November, reported that it was on the point of leaving the Yenisei delta for a point far to the eastward on the Arctic coast. The work which it had in view was one which would occupy a year and it is doubtful whether the party will be in communication with the world at any time during that period. The expedition had already at the time of writing been successful in obtaining valuable information concerning the habits and customs of the Yurok, the Samoyed and the Dogan tribes, and also in making collections to illustrate the native arts. The work of the Siberian expedition will necessarily be slow, since distances are very great and means of travel are of the most primitive kind and consist chiefly of dog sleds.

Towards the end of the year, through the generosity of the president of the Museum, Mr. Eckley B. Coxe, Jr., an expedition was equipped for archæological exploration in Egypt. Mr. Clarence S. Fisher, curator of the Egyptian Section, left Philadelphia in November in charge of this expedition and by latest advices is negotiating with the authorities in Cairo for sites to excavate. The Museum is thus enabled to enlarge its operations in Egypt at an opportune time and to take advantage of conditions which are favorable to the conduct of archæological work on a satisfactory basis in the Nile Valley. At the same time the Museum continues to cooperate with the British School of Archæology in Egypt, by making an annual contribution to the funds for Professor Flinders-Petrie's excavations. Some of the best objects in the Museum have been obtained as a result of this coöperation.

Mention has already been made of the fact that the Museum has made a new departure in acquiring collections of Chinese art. In order that the growth of these collections may be intelligently directed, with first-hand information from the sources of early Chinese civilization, it has been decided to send an expedition to China to study the native arts on their own soil. As the year closes, Mr. C. W. Bishop, assistant curator of the Section of Ethnology, is completing his preparations to start on this important mission. The appointment of Mr. Bishop to the position which he holds in the Museum, an appointment that took place in July, was made with the China expedition in view.



FIG. 95.—Illuminated Painting of Avalokitesvara.  
(Gift of Mrs. John L. LeConte and Dr. Robert G. Le Conte.)

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In the American Section of the Museum, Mr. George G. Heye, vice-president of the Museum and chairman of the Section, continued his systematic development of the Heye collections in a way that has increased the magnitude as well as the scientific value of these collections in a marked degree. The Heye collections of North American Archæology and Ethnology, though they do not belong to the Museum, have been on view here for six years, and form one of the important features of the exhibitions. It is gratifying to be able to record that Mr. Heye's constant efforts to build up this collection along scientific lines and to make it more and more complete have continued to be successful. Already the Heye Collection is one of the foremost of its kind in the world.

Most of the objects obtained during the year have, of necessity, been placed in the storage rooms of the Museum, since there is no room for their display. Two new exhibitions, however, have been opened during the autumn. By utilizing the main stairway we have been able to install an exhibition of Chinese and Tibetan art. The other exhibition installed consists of reproductions of ancient frescoes, metalwork, pottery and faience from Crete, Mycenae and Tiryns. Together with these reproductions have been installed original objects obtained by our own expeditions to Crete. This exhibition has attracted much attention, especially on the part of the teachers and pupils in the schools and colleges. It has special value in illustrating the foundations of European civilization.

During the year the development of the Museum Library has been continued according to the needs of the curators in the several sections. The object of this library is to provide for the curators a collection of reference books which they will always have at hand in connection with their work in the Museum. The books selected are of permanent standard value. The number of bound volumes added to the library during 1914 was six hundred and sixty-seven.

In the line of educational influence in the community itself and the world at large, the Museum's achievement during the year has kept pace with its expansion in other directions. Six volumes of scientific matter have been issued and three more have been put in press. Two of those published deal with special aspects of American Indian culture. All of the other volumes are the results of investigations carried on by scholars upon the collections of Babylonian tablets in the Museum. The most important of these is a work in



three volumes by Dr. Arno Poebel in which he reproduces and interprets a long series of historical texts and a long series of grammatical texts selected from these collections. Dr. Poebel's handmade copies of these difficult and often fragmentary inscriptions preserved on the unbaked clay tablets of ancient Babylonia, written for the most part in the language of still more ancient Sumeria, represent long and painstaking labor. His translations of and commentaries on these writings are the result of sound and conscientious scholarship. There can be little doubt that Dr. Poebel's studies just published by the Museum form one of the most important contributions to the history of antiquity that has ever been made.

Another important piece of work in connection with the Babylonian collections was accomplished by Prof. Stephen Langdon of Oxford University, who spent a month at the Museum studying the Sumerian documents in this collection of tablets. Prof. Langdon's special interest was in the study of liturgical texts, many of which he found among the collections from Nippur. In his examination of these tablets, he came across one fragment which proved to contain the Sumerian version of the ancient legend which describes the creation of the earth and the disgrace of mankind through disobedience of the gods. The other portions of this tablet were subsequently found among the collections unearthed at Nippur and recently cleaned in the Museum. When all of these fragments had been joined, photographs were sent to Prof. Langdon from which he has prepared his copies and translations. A brief description of this tablet by Prof. Langdon has already been published in the *JOURNAL*. Other preliminary accounts have appeared in the *Proceedings of the Society of Biblical Archaeology* and elsewhere. The volume which contains the complete result of Dr. Langdon's investigations is now passing through the press and will appear shortly in the Babylonian Series of the Museum.

Prof. George A. Barton of Bryn Mawr College is another of the Babylonian scholars who have taken advantage of the opportunities afforded by the Babylonian collections in the Museum for research in this field. Dr. Barton, who has devoted himself especially to the earlier forms of Babylonian writing, has already finished a volume containing a large series of examples of ancient texts written in the Sumerian language and in the earlier scripts, selected from the collections. The contents of these texts present a variety of subjects, dealing with administrative and business transactions. This volume

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is now passing through the press and Dr. Barton is at work upon a volume of religious texts.

Teachers and pupils from the schools of the city and from local colleges have continued to make use of the exhibits in connection with their studies of history and of art. From the staff of the Museum, which as in recent years has been at their service, they have received much help.

The number of visitors for the year was 54,286. These figures compared with the figures for 1913 show a falling off of 20,000. The explanation of this condition is to be found in the fact that during the year 1913 an effort was made by means of placards and similar devices to apprise the public of the existence of the Museum and to inform them of its purposes. These notices, set up in public places, were used during the years 1912 and 1913 as an experiment in order to test the value of this method of conveying information to the public. In order to check up the influence thus exerted they were removed at the end of 1913 with the result that has been shown by the figures just given.

This brief review of the year's work brings out the gratifying fact that it has been one of the most successful in the Museum's history. This success, it must be remembered, entails still larger obligations on the future and creates the necessity for a greater effort during the months to come. The enlargement of the collections and the expansion of the Museum's work along new lines mean a constantly increasing obligation. When a collection has once been started, no matter what its character may be, there are created not only the need for its proper maintenance and for the funds to defray the expenses connected therewith, but the equally important need of its continuous growth. This growth is inseparable from a healthy condition in the Museum, and the constant expansion of the different sections which is thus brought about creates in turn the need for an ever enlarging building. The actual situation and the immediate outlook were summed up in a statement made to the Board of Managers at the December meeting by the chairman of the Executive Committee. Dr. Harrison's statement was in part as follows.

"The end of the year finds the Museum in a very satisfying condition. The section of the building which is now nearing completion is taken care of by funds provided at the outset, and we will have a

balance in the building fund of \$50,000 after all bills are paid. As a result of the expenditure of about \$250,000 we will be in a position in about sixty days to throw open to the public a building which is exquisite in design and unique as an example of modern architecture.

"While these building operations have been going on we have continued without any relaxation to increase the collections, both by purchase and by expeditions. We have, at the present time, four expeditions in the field or about to take the field; one of these is in South America, one in Egypt, one in Siberia and one is about to leave for China. All of these expeditions are provided for, either by cash in hand or by valid subscriptions, to maintain them in the field during the entire period of their investigations. Notwithstanding the fact that our expenditures for collections have been liberal and that every object purchased during the year has been fully paid for, the treasurer's report shows a balance of \$60,000 in the fund for increasing the collections.

"All of the building funds, as well as the funds for expeditions and collections, have been derived from private subscriptions, no money for these purposes having been received from the state or from any public source. We are without indebtedness of any kind.

"At the same time that I make this brief statement showing the very satisfactory condition in which we find the Museum at the end of the year, I would like to take a forward look and to call the attention of the Board to some matters for immediate consideration.

"When we decided to build the Rotunda it was our purpose to continue the building operations by the construction of one or more of those parts that extend to the eastward according to the architects' plan. The Rotunda, soon to be opened, will not be sufficient to take care of the collections now stored away, to say nothing of those that will be accumulating as time goes on. The time has now come when the further progress of the Museum requires the construction of a new wing. The cost of such an extension will not be less than \$500,000. The Building Committee, together with the other members of the Board, will therefore be called upon to raise this sum together with an additional \$200,000 for an endowment to provide for the maintenance of that new extension. In order to go on successfully with our work, therefore, we shall have the agreeable task before us of raising a sum of about \$700,000 for building purposes and for endowment.

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"These are the problems which the Board will have to solve and for which it must find a solution in order to continue last year's successful record and go on with the work in which we are engaged. With the admirable spirit of coöperation which has enabled us to work successfully in the past we may face these problems without any misgivings, for if we work together as we have done heretofore, we can take up the task of 1915 under still more favorable auspices."

In the course of his address Dr. Harrison called attention to the fact that the entire membership in the Museum is only three hundred and fifty, a figure which is not at all in proportion to the population of Philadelphia. In Boston, for example, a city less than one-third the size of Philadelphia, the Museum of Fine Arts has a membership, according to the annual report of that institution, of about seventeen hundred. The income derived by the University Museum from its membership fees is only one-tenth of the income derived from a similar source by the Boston Museum. It is therefore obvious that the present number of contributing members in the University Museum is far from a satisfactory one. It is very desirable to increase this membership during 1915.

G. B. G.