

SOVEREIGNS AND SCIENCE

By FRITZ HAAS

CURATOR OF LOWER INVERTEBRATES

A recent acquisition in the Library of Chicago Natural History Museum is a Japanese book* dealing with the sea-slugs of Sagami Bay, Japan. This exceptionally fine publication contains numerous plates in color illustrating these shell-less snails that are often found to be both striking and brilliant in color. The highly technical nature of this volume makes it of interest primarily to the scientist. But the fact that the data was collected by the Emperor of Japan puts the publication into the field of general interest.

It is well known that Emperor Hirohito has a strong leaning toward the natural sciences. This is evidenced by his maintenance of the small biological station at his summer villa on Sagami Bay, where he has devoted many years to searching the waters of this basin for their fascinating marine fauna. All specimens found during this time were photographed while alive and fresh, and fragile specimens and those likely to deteriorate or to lose their colors when immersed in preserving fluids were sketched in color by a special artist.

IN TWO LANGUAGES

The Emperor, who considers himself an interested layman, entrusted all the sea-slugs he had collected to Dr. Kikutaro Baba, a noted authority in this field. The results of Dr. Baba's research were published in both Japanese and English. A book of this magnitude, containing the many colored plates necessary to illustrate all the specimens found, and one of such excellent workmanship in print and binding, is exceedingly expensive to publish even under normal conditions. The cost would be prohibitive after a war that had been lost. The assumption, therefore, that the Emperor may have paid a portion or all of the expenses of publication may not be erroneous. The appellation of "Patron of the Sciences" has been merited by the Emperor through his work and such contributions. Throughout history, kings and emperors of Siam, China, and Japan encouraged the fine arts. But it is here for the first time that an Oriental potentate has shown a stimulating and practical interest in natural history.

SPURRED BY CURIOSITY

It was not until geographical exploration and discovery had reached the more distant horizons during the 16th and 17th centuries that the western world indicated its desire to learn more about the natural sciences. Returning vessels brought to their respective homelands a wealth of strange animals and plants found in newly discovered countries.

Curiosity was a powerful influence that stimulated the urge to collect and display these newly found objects and resulted in the development of research in this interesting branch of knowledge.

Thus began the collection called the Cabinet du Roi in France. The Holy German Empire established a similar collection at Vienna and called it Museum Caesareum. Corresponding cabinets were collected by sovereigns of lesser countries. These cabinets, privately founded and owned, were the forerunners of the public museum of today. Among the renowned museums that developed from these private collections are the Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle in Paris (formerly the Cabinet du Roi) and the Kais. Kgl. Naturhistorische Hofmuseum in Vienna (formerly the Museum Caesareum Vindobonense). The practice of prefixing the names of these public museums with the word "imperial" or "royal" was primarily to emphasize sovereign patronage in these institutions and not to indicate private ownership. With the decline of royalty in central Europe, the references to princely patronage gradually disappeared from the names of the museums and were superseded by the word National, Austrian, Prussian, etc. This trend is reflected in the creation of the Oceanographical Institute and Museum in the principality of Monaco. Here, the founder, Prince Albert, whose beneficence in this connection is not publicized, judiciously employed the funds derived from the princely owned gaming tables at Monte Carlo in the endowment and maintenance of these two highly important and growing institutions.

Following the examples of their sovereigns, the wealthy aristocracy began to endow the biological sciences, as well as to build large private collections of birds, insects, and shells. Their care was entrusted to the specialists who prepared the specimens for purposes of exhibition and further research. Upon the death of the founder, the collection was generally given to a public museum or formed the basis of a new museum. Occasionally, wives of reigning sovereigns displayed equal interest in natural history and expressed their interest in establishing smaller museums of their own. One such historical example was the collection begun by Louise Ulrica of Sweden, which was to become the basis for one of the classical studies by the renowned Linnaeus. Profound interest in the sciences caused certain members of the high nobility to become distinguished specialists. One such individual was a nephew of Napoleon I. Expeditions for the purpose of exploration and further development in the fields of science were promoted as well as undertaken by others. The active interest and patronage of Prince Maximilian Wied-Neuwied is an outstanding example of individual achievement in the natural sciences.

By about 150 years ago, the general public

INDIAN FISHERMEN—

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the fish is not harmful to human beings. Fish poisoning was practised to some extent also by the Indians of Central America, eastern United States (e.g., by the Iroquois and Cherokees), and California.

A unique and ingenious fish trap was used by some of the upper Amazon tribes and in the Guianas. A conical basket, which was attached to a spring pole and placed between crossed sticks in a stream, was held in place by a baited trigger. When a fish entered the basket and touched the bait, the trigger was released and the basket swung up into the air with the fish head-down inside. This would be an excellent device for the Chicago lake-front fishermen but would require a special trap license and might have to be modified to conform with federal regulations pertaining to fish traps.

had elevated its standard of living to a point where the need to give expression to this knowledge and wealth was felt. Interpreting the example of "noblesse oblige" literally in that wealth obliges as well as does nobility, the well-to-do citizens provided the resources for public instruction in the field of natural history. Thus was born the famous Senckenberg Museum, when the physician Johann Christian Senckenberg of Frankfurt am Main in 1772 bequeathed his accumulated wealth, specimens, and books to a foundation of his own with the words "I wish to erect a temple to the sciences."

During the past century many great expeditions have been sponsored by individuals of great moral and intellectual advancement. A layman explorer of repute and esteem was Eduard Rüppell, who, inspired by the fine precedent established by Senckenberg, explored the Sudan, the Kordofan, and Abyssinia in the second and third decades of the 19th century. His entire resources were devoted to exploration, the care of his collections at Senckenberg Museum, and the purchase of scientific literature.

CITIZEN-SPONSORS

While rulers in the Orient continue to enjoy the prestige of fostering the sciences, the western world is no longer dependent upon this royal patronage. Today the enlightened and responsible citizen recognizes the importance of supporting research, and it is with pride that we are able to point to the monuments of his endeavor represented by such institutions as the Smithsonian in Washington, Harvard in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and Chicago Natural History Museum. The promotion of pure science is becoming increasingly important and the opportunity for continued research is greatly facilitated through the generosity of civic-minded individuals.

**Opisthobranchia of Sagami Bay*, collected by His Majesty, the Emperor of Japan, described, with an introduction by Kikutaro Baba, D.S.



Haas, Fritz. 1950. "Sovereigns and Science." *Bulletin* 21(8), 8-8.

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