Forgotten Books

History and Description of the Royal Museum of Natural History

by

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HISTORY AND DESCRIPTION

OF THE

ROYAL MUSEUM

OF

NATURAL HISTORY.


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NATURAL HISTORY,

PUBLISHED BY ORDER OF THE ADMINISTRATION OF THAT ESTABLISHMENT.

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH OF M. DELEUZE.

With three Plans and fourteen Views of the Galleries, Gardens, and Menagerie.

PARIS:

PRINTED FOR A. ROYER, AT THE JARDIN DU ROI,

BY L. T. CELLOT, RUE DU COLOMBIER, N° 30.

1823.

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Books.

Vol. I on Botany of Bardi

" II on Animals.

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The ground floor is composed of the porter's lodge to the south, and of several rooms with doors and windows of iron grating which open into the court. The largest of them contains models of agricultural tools, and is the lecture-

(1) The Cabinet of natural history is open to the public every tuesday and friday, from three o'clock until six in the summer, and from three until dark in the winter. Admission is given on mondays, wednesdays and saturdays, to those who have students' cards, or who present a ticket signed by one of the professors.

room of M. Thouin; the others serve as store-rooms for such objects as cannot be placed in the galleries; they are lower as they approach the hill from the elevation of the soil in that direction; so that the ceiling, which is 12 feet from the ground on the south, is only 3 feet on the north. Large trunks of petrified wood are placed between the gratings.

In the middle of the second floor of the building is a very beautiful clock, of which we see the mechanism, as it occupies the space of a window and is between two glasses. The windows of the second floor are merely for ornament, as it is lighted from the top.

The interior of the cabinet is composed of six saloons on the first floor without including the library at the end, and five on the second. The first floor is devoted to geology, mineralogy, and the collections of reptiles and fishes: the second is occupied by the quadrupeds, birds, insects, shells, etc. Some of the semicircular sashes, which give light from the roof, are raised and lowered at pleasure for the admission of air. Curtains are placed over the cases when not open to the public. This second floor, the middle of which is a long gallery, has a door leading to the terrace by the side of the street.

We will now enter the great staircase by the

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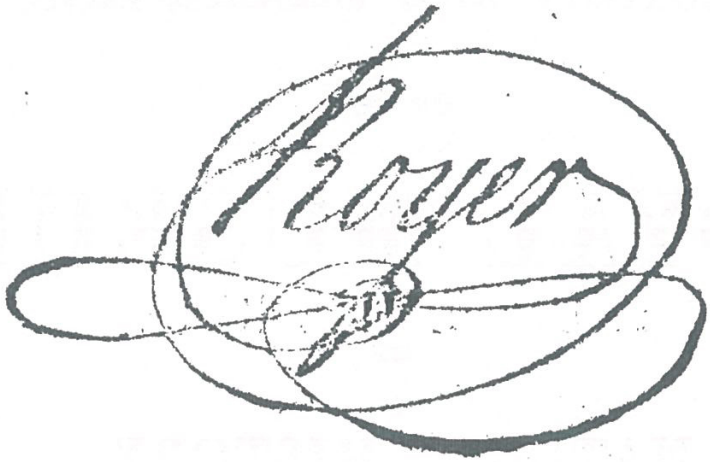

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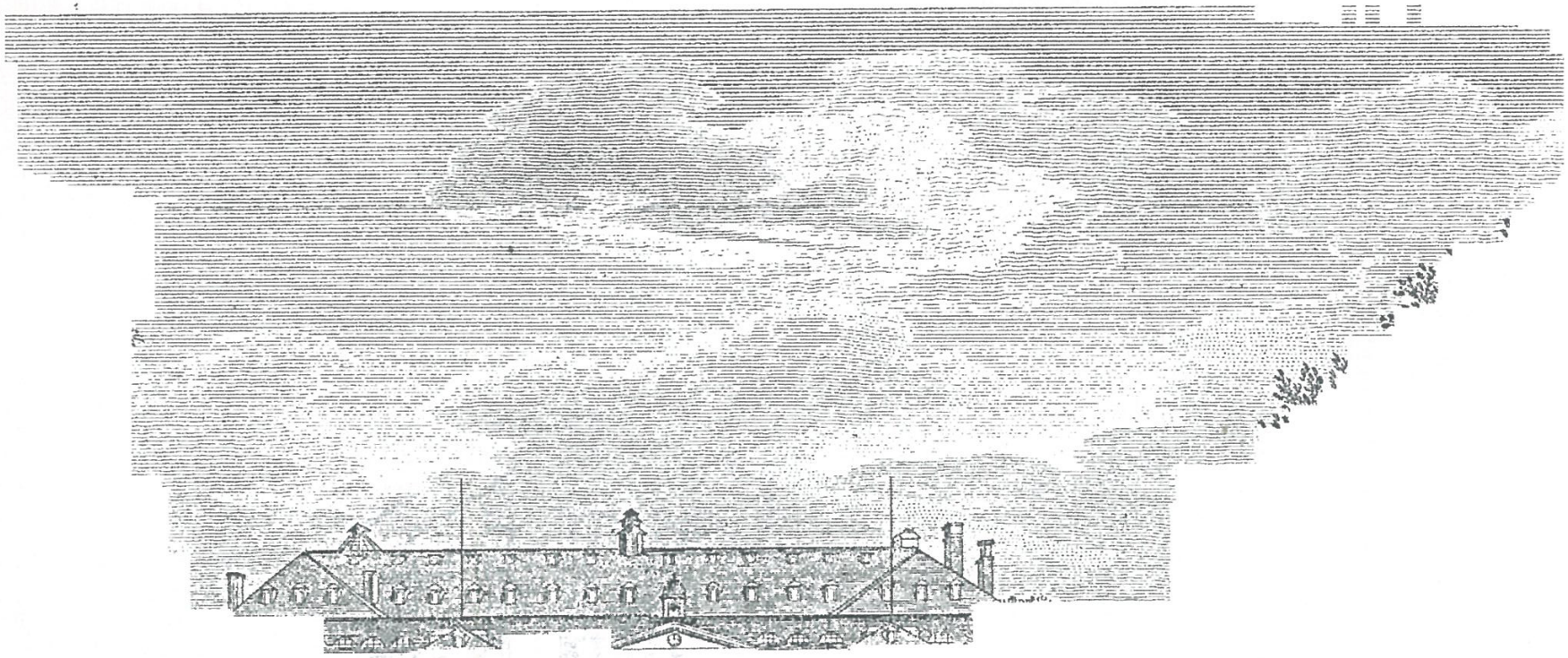

CHAPTER II.

CABINET OF NATURAL HISTORY.

§ I. CURSORY VIEW OF THE WHOLE.

In the historical notice which forms the first part of this work, we have related how the cabinet of natural history became remarkable from the improvements completed or begun by Buffon, and afterwards continued; observing that it was necessary to increase it one third in 1808, although the anatomical and botanical collections had been separated from it, and galleries expressly constructed for them. It is therefore useless to recur to those details, and we will confine ourselves to its present state and the distribution of the objects it contains.

The building which bears the name of Cabinet or Gallery of natural history, and of which one room is devoted to the library, is 390 feet (or 60 *toises*) long. It is exposed to the east on the side of the garden, from which it is separated by a court and an iron railing. The front, which has

thirty-three windows on the first floor and the same number on the second, is divided into three equal parts. The middle part, which has a small projecting wing on each side, was formerly the dwelling of the superintendant and the cabinet. The southern part, which contains the library, was almost all built in the time of Buffon; and that division which extends from the second wing to the hill was added in 1808. The gate and staircase opposite the great avenue were then suppressed. The present entrance from the street into the garden opens into that part of the court which is in front of the house where Buffon lived. The door of the cabinet and the staircase have been placed at the other end in the angle next to the guardhouse and orangery. In the first wing there is another staircase which leads to the library and galleries on the days they are not open to the public (1).

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We will now enter the great staircase by the

guardhouse, and go through all the rooms, beginning with the geological collection. Those who enter by the small staircase, and wish to follow the order which we point out, will turn to the right, and go through the mineralogical rooms to reach the further end.

§ II. GEOLOGICAL COLLECTION.

On the landing place of the stairs by the side of the door is a very large jointed basaltic column from La Tour, in the department of Puy-de-Dôme, given by the late M. Desmarest of the academy of sciences. This column is surmounted by a beautiful pyramid of rock crystal 2 feet 6 inches in diameter at the base: it was found in Le Valais. Next to it are two other jointed basaltic columns from the giant's causeway in Antrim in Ireland, and other irregular columns from Saint Sandoux, in Puy-de-Dôme. These objects announce our approach to the geological collection which occupies the three first saloons of the first floor.

The entrance hall contains the remains of vegetables and invertebrated animals which are found in a great number of strata. These remains, which almost all belong to lost species, are classed geologically, that is according to the date of the formations in which they are found. The greater number are accompanied by a portion of the rock which contained them.

In this hall we also see several series of rocks, designed to illustrate the geology of different parts of the french territory. They are placed here for a time only, as they will be arranged in the third hall as soon as the Museum is possessed of a sufficient number of fossil vegetables or invertebrated animals to fill the cases which are intended for them.

The fossil vegetables are placed in the cases to the left and opposite to the entrance: they are arranged according to the order of the formations to which they belong, and the age of which they characterize. Although their assemblage in this point of view is recent, we already remark some interesting specimens, among which we must be content to notice:

1st. A series of the larger herbaceous plants, exclusively found in beds of sandstone and coarse slate accompanying coal.

2d. A large trunk of dicotyledonous wood, which has been changed into silex after having been bored full of holes by ines: it comes from Maestricht.

3d. A large plate of quartzose sandstone covered with various impressions of leaves: it was found near Le Mans, by M. Ménard de la Groye, who presented it to the Museum.

4th. An enormous trunk of palm-tree, easily

recognised by the scales or remains of the leaf-stalks with which it is covered: it was found at Vailly, near Soissons, by M. Menat, who gave it to the Museum.

5th. Two beautiful impressions of leaves of the chamærops palm, given by M. A. Brongniart, taken out of the quarries in the neighbourhood of Aix, near Marseilles.

Lastly. A numerous series of impressions of leaves on the newer limestone, found at Monte Bolca, on the confines of the Veronese and Vicentine in Italy.

The invertebrated fossil animals are in the cases to the right of the entrance: they are divided into three sections: the zoophytes or radiated animals, the articulated animals and the mollusca. Each section is subdivided according to the age of the formations from which the specimens were taken: that is, we see in each section the species which characterize either the transition or intermediary, the secondary, or tertiary formations. This distribution, although merely geological, is so much the more advantageous here, as many specimens belonging to the first and third sections, and remarkable for their insulated position and beautiful preservation, have been inserted in the great collection of zoophytes and living mollusca on the

second floor (1), and in which we must study the genera and species, when we wish to become acquainted with them independently of geological considerations.

We will now notice the most remarkable objects of each section.

Amongst the zoophytes:

1st. A beautiful stem of encrinite, from the secondary limestone in the neighbourhood of Brunswick.

2d. Several polypis and echinites belonging to the chalk formation in the neighbourhood of Maestricht; drawings and descriptions of which are given by the late M. Faujas Saint Fond, in his work on the quarries of that city.

Amongst the articulated animals:

1st. Several fine specimens of trilobites (genus ogygia of M. A. Brongniart) from the slate quarries of Angers.

2d. A complete specimen of a trilobite (genus calymène of M. A. Brongniart) from Dudley in England, presented by M. A. de Humboldt.

3d. Several specimens of trilobites (genus calymène) found in the transition slate of La Hunaudière, in the department of the lower Loire,

(1) M. De la Marck has thought it necessary to bring the fossil and living species together, in the collection which serves as the type of his complete history of invertebrated animals.

by M. Regley, assistant naturalist, and given by him.

4th. A very distinct limulus, a precious specimen, long since described by Walch and Knorr. It was found in the secondary limestone of Pappenheim, and a good representation of it may be seen in the work of MM. Brongniart and Desmarest.

5th. A large palinurus contained in the tabular limestone of Monte Bolca.

Amongst the mollusca:

1st. Several hippurites and orthoceratites of a large size, from the ancient limestone beds of lake Erie, in the United States, and from the northern side of the Pyrenees.

2d. Radiolites, partly siliceous, and dicerates collected in the more recent limestone beds of the island of Aix, in the department of the Lower Charente, by M. Dorbigny, correspondent of the Museum.

3d. Nautilithes and ammonites, the shells of which have preserved their pearly lustre. They are from the sandy clay formation above the chalk. The greater number were given by M. Crow, and come from Sheppy in England.

4th. The cast of a gigantic ammonite of whose locality we are ignorant, but which probably comes from the lower part of the chalk formation.

Lastly. In the other cases, which are at the bottom of the hall to the right, we find the following series of rocks, which are only placed there temporarily, as we have before said, and which are intended for the completion of the geographical collection already begun in the third room. These are:

1st. The principal rocks of the tertiary formation, which constitute the soil of the environs of Paris. It is well known that this formation has been the subject of a complete monography, published by MM. Cuvier and Brongniart.

2d. Various rocks from the neighbourhood of Nantes, Rennes and Paimpol, given by M. Dubuisson of Nantes and M. Regley. Amongst the latter we remark the ancient lavæ discovered at Treguier in 1821, by M. Regley.

3d. A fine series of rocks from the environs of Cherbourg, Caen and Havre, collected and given by M. Constant Prevost.

4th. A series of rocks from the neighbourhood of Aix and Marseilles, collected by M. Fontanier, travelling naturalist to the Museum. Amongst them we see a large specimen of compact limestone more recent, containing scoriæ, which was brought from the volcanic mountain of Beaulieu by M. Ménard de la Groye.

5th. A considerable number of specimens of

argentiferous lead from the neighbourhood of Vienna, in the department of Isère: the Museum is indebted for them to the viscount Héricart de Thury.

6th. Some lavæ from the department of Ardèche, given by the late M. Fanjas de Saint Fond; amongst which we distinguish a column of basalt, containing in its center a fragment of granite altered by the heat, and various fragments of secondary limestone from Villeneuve de Berg, changed by its contact with a basaltic vein.

Lastly. A numerous suite of lava, tufæ and other rocks, which constitute the departments of Cantal and Puy-de-Dôme. The cabinet is indebted for them to viscount Héricart de Thury and to M. Lucas, keeper of the galleries of the Museum.

The second hall contains the rich and numerous series of fossil vertebrated animals, and a general and methodical collection of the different formations which compose the mineral crust of the earth. This last collection is arranged in two large chests, 20 feet in length, with drawers on both sides, placed in the middle of the room. We will first examine the fossils of this room, to complete the description we began in the entrance hall. We shall thus pass in review the whole of the organic remains of the former