

Shufeldt's 'Scientific Taxidermy for Museums.'¹—This memoir is presented by Dr. Shufeldt as the result of studies of mounted specimens largely in the collections of the United States National Museum, made by him at the request of the authorities of that Institution. As an expert whose opinion could be considered authoritative, he was desired to make a critical examination of the specimens of taxidermy displayed "in the National Museum and Smithsonian Institution" and to suggest plans for further improving exhibits of this nature.

Dr. Shufeldt's essay opens with a general review of the taxidermist's profession and its requirements. He compares the old with the 'New Taxidermy' and, in our opinion, rightly claims for the latter a place among the arts. Then follows a detailed consideration of many examples of the taxidermist's skill, including representatives of Invertebrates, Fishes, Reptiles, Birds, and Mammals. This part of the paper, covering 48 pages, is very fully illustrated by 82 full-page half-tone plates from photographs of the specimens described and commented upon.

Dr. Shufeldt's remarks are timely. The day has arrived when the work of the artist-taxidermist should receive the attention it deserves. The day has passed when the name taxidermist can be applied to the whole group of animal stuffers and mounters, from the village barber, who 'sets up' a pet cat or canary, to the expert modeller of a bison.

It is only within comparatively recent years that taxidermy could rightly claim rank as an art. Its development is in part due to the cumulative agency of transmitted experience, but more especially to the establishment of departments of taxidermy in our large museums. Here, secure of a salary which is in no way affected by the amount of work performed, the artist-taxidermist can give full scope to his originality. Patience and an unlimited amount of time are absolutely necessary adjuncts of the higher class of taxidermy. For this reason, even when other things are equal, the commercial taxidermist cannot compete with the museum worker. If the former should devote one half the time to his subjects that the latter conscientiously gives to his, he would become bankrupt. His customers, the public, are not educated to a proper appreciation of truly artistic taxidermy and they are therefore given no more than their money's worth. In other words, they pay a low price for an inferior class of work.

Dr. Shufeldt is therefore to be thanked for his clear exposition of the differences which exist between the trade and the art of taxidermy. Let us hope his words will so open the eyes of the public to the merits of this new art that a taxidermist may feel warranted in establishing a studio whose patrons shall not be purchasers of rugs and feather screens, but in a strict sense patrons of the arts.—F. M. C.

¹Scientific Taxidermy for Museums (Based on a Study of the United States Government Collections). By R. W. Shufeldt, M. D. Report U. S. Nat. Mus. (for 1892), pp. 369-436. Pls. xv-xcvi. Washington, 1894.