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The continuing debate on the function of museums I now discover is redundant : the answer, like many things, had been found by our forebears, albeit Americans! Nestling on the shelves of the British Library is a journal, published in Providence, Rhode Island at the turn of the century. It is entitled " The Ladies Monthly Museum or Polite repository of amusement and instruction, being an assemblage of whatever can please the fancy, interest the mind or exhalt the character of the British Fair! This quaint but in many ways viable definition of a museum is unfortunately not supported by the contents, the chief redeeming feature of which is the charming hand coloured plates depicting the ladies' fashions of the time.

PARACELSUS.

European Conservation Convention Ratified

On 1 June the UK became the tenth country to ratify the Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats which was signed by 19 member Council of Europe States, Finland and the EEC in 1979. Under the Convention, the contracting parties undertake to ensure strict protection of 119 plant species at present in danger of disappearing from Europe and to take active steps to safeguard their biotopes. The same undertaking applies to 400 species of fauna and their environments. The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 together with a proposed Order-in-Council for Northern Ireland, which it is hoped to introduce later this year, enables the UK to ratify this Convention.

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