

this is borne out by what he tells us of their unreasoning "adherence to what they believe to be the text of these old tales. 'I don't understand it, but the history says so;' 'it is so,' 'the story says so,' was positively affirmed again and again." This conservatism accounts for the survival of so many pagan ideas and customs among the people, among which the legends themselves may be reckoned. The latter are believed like "the histories of the Bible, or the 'Lives of the Saints.' In fact, the problem of reconciling religion and science presents itself to the Basque mind in this strange guise—how to reconcile these narratives with those of the Bible and of the Church. The general solution is that they happened before the time of which the Bible speaks, or before Adam fell. They are *lege zaharreko istorri guak*—'histories of the ancient law'—by which is apparently meant the time before Christianity. 'This happened, sir, in the time when all animals and all things could speak,' was said again and again by the narrators at the commencement of their story;" a statement which curiously fits in with a similar belief among the Bushmen. Altogether Mr. Webster has produced a most interesting book, and we hope that the welcome given to it may induce him to make it but the first instalment of other researches among the folk-lore of the Basques.

A. H. SAYCE

#### OUR BOOK SHELF

*French Accent.* By A. H. Keane. (Asher and Co., 1877.)

THIS is an excellent and useful little pamphlet, in which the author claims to have discovered and formulated for the first time the laws which regulate French accentuation. Putting aside the tonic accent which usually falls on the last syllable of a word, and corresponds with the toned syllable of the Latin or Italic original, we have three accents: the acute, the grave, and the circumflex, which Mr. Keane terms respectively the euphonic, the grammatical, and the historical. The circumflex denotes the loss of a sound, as do also the acute when on initial *e*, and the grave when on final *e*. The grave is alone employed grammatically to indicate the grammatical changes of words, and Mr. Keane lays down the two rules that "e followed by grammatical *e* mute, one consonant intervening, takes the grave accent," and that "every unaccented *e* followed by one consonant not final is mute." Mr. Keane shows himself well acquainted with the latest philological researches into the French language, and both pupil and teacher will find great assistance from his attempt to introduce law and order into the nature and position of the French accents. However, he is not altogether the first in the field, and it must be remembered that the philological ignorance of those who have stereotyped the use of the accents has caused it to be somewhat arbitrary. The Neufchâtel Bible of 1535 has no accents, and the first to employ them regularly, though somewhat capriciously, was Jacques Dubois, in the sixteenth century. In "An Introductory for to Learn French trewly," published by Du Guez, in London, probably about 1560, the accents are written below the line.

*Étude sur la Dégénérescence Physiologique des Peuples Civilisés.* Par M. Tschouriloff. (Paris: Leroux, 1876.)

THIS is a careful and conscientious discussion of a class of statistics that have never been so carefully discussed before, and have in consequence been interpreted by different writers in very different senses. There are two

questions, both of which M. Tschouriloff answers in the affirmative, but which perhaps he does not always separate as clearly as could be wished; the one is whether the French and other civilised nations are deteriorating in their *physique*, and the other whether their deterioration is due to the abstraction of able-bodied men to serve and perish in the army. He has no doubt as to the deterioration in France, Sweden, and Saxony; thus, in the latter country, the number of men too infirm to serve as conscripts has largely increased of late years; in 1832-36, one-third of the men were rejected; in 1850-54, one-half. He quotes numerous medical authorities, whose opinions are printed in the article, "Recrutement," in the *Dictionnaire Médical*, to show the evil effects of industrial occupation on the health of factory workmen, and alludes to many other interesting facts of the same nature. But the bulk of the work is occupied in tracing the effects of the conscription on the French race. The statistical examination of the returns of the medical examiners is of a necessity very complex, allowances and corrections having to be made on many grounds. Even so apparently simple a problem as that of determining the amount of vigour abstracted from a population by the absence of a given fraction of them during a limited period, such as that of the great war, is in reality very complicated, and requires the free use of tables of mortality and of fecundity for different ages. The upshot of the author's inquiries is to show that the amount so abstracted is much greater than appears at first sight to be the case. He therefore ascribes a very seriously damaging effect to the vigour of a population by the carrying on of great wars. It is truly sad to read the statistical tables of the increase in France of a long series of such hereditary diseases as scrofula, hare-lip, varicose veins, paralysis, madness, and skin maladies, due in large part to the propagation of the race by men who had been rejected as too infirm to serve in the army, and to so many of the healthy men having been destroyed or displaced. This treatise will become a standard work of reference, both in respect to its conclusions and to the statistical operations by which they have been attained.

F. G.

*The Northern Barrier of India.* A Popular Account of the Jummoo and Kashmir Territories. By Frederic Drew. With Map and Illustrations. (London: Stanford, 1877.)

THIS is a popular edition of Mr. Drew's valuable work on Jummoo and Kashmir, noticed in NATURE, vol. xii. p. 550. That work was perhaps too formidable for the general reader to undertake, and Mr. Drew has therefore done well in selecting from it those parts likely to be of general interest. The selection has been judiciously made, and as the illustrations have been retained, and a map showing the races as well as the physical features, the work will be found of great value and interest by those who hesitate to undertake the larger volume. It deserves a wide circulation.

*The Two Americas: an Account of Sport and Travel.* By Major Sir Rose Lambert Price, Bart. With Illustrations. (London: Sampson Low, 1877.)

WE took up this book with little expectation of finding much in it either edifying or interesting, and have been most agreeably disappointed. The author, in one of Her Majesty's ships, touched at various places on the east and west coasts of South America, and although most of the ground has already been gone over, he has the faculty of seeing and describing the already known under new aspects. He also visited Mexico, California, and the Yosemite region. From beginning to end the narrative is thoroughly entertaining, and even those who are well read in American travel will find that Sir Rose Price is able to tell them much that is new.