

and the description of the foot of the fly is of very special interest. The wing-joint is described with great care and thoroughness, in connection with the mechanics of flight.

Comparisons between insect and vertebrate structures are made with great boldness. One example will probably astonish common-place morphologists. Weismann observed that the femoro-tibial part of the fly's leg forms at first a mere lateral prominence, which is converted by segmentation and constriction into a bent knee, the upper part yielding the coxa and femur, the lower part the tibia. Mr. Lowne confirms this account, and illustrates it by figuring five stages (Fig. 34). Next he compares the lateral prominence to the exopodite of a biramous limb. Then he adopts Dr. Gaskell's suggestion that the limbs of an Arthropod may correspond to the visceral arches of a Vertebrate. In the following sentence we reach the climax. "The double character of the embryonic appendages in the Crustacea, and in the maxillæ of insects, as well as in the thoracic limbs of the rudimentary fly-nymph, is certainly very suggestive of the double character of the pterygomaxillary arch, or even of the hyomandibular in vertebrates."

So much conscientious labour has been bestowed upon this treatise, and it is so useful to the student of insect anatomy, that it is a pity to see the text encumbered with discussions which, to avoid dogmatism, we will merely call extremely hazardous. Would it not be better to bring out such views in another place, and leave the *magnum opus* free of doubtful matter?

When all deductions have been made, the book must be counted a valuable addition to the literature of the subject.

L. C. M.

Races and Peoples: Lectures on the Science of Ethnography. By Daniel G. Brinton. (New York: N. D. C. Hodges, 1890. Sold by Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner, and Co.)

THE lectures of which this book consists were delivered at the Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia, early in 1890. They present a good general view of the leading principles of ethnography, as these are understood by the author. He begins with a discussion of what he calls the physical and psychical elements of ethnography, next treats of the beginnings and subdivisions of races, then takes in order the divisions in which he arranges the various groups of mankind, and finally deals with problems relating to "acclimation," amalgamation, and the influence of civilization on savages, and offers some suggestions as to the destiny of races. The human species seems to him to include five races—the Eur-african, the Austafrican, the Asian, the American, and insular and littoral peoples. Each of these is subdivided into branches, stocks, and groups; and an effort is made to define the traits which, according to Dr. Brinton, the members of each race have in common. It is not always easy to understand the principle of his classification. The Eur-african race, for instance, includes the following groups: Libyans, Egyptians, East Africans, Arabians, Abyssinians, Chaldæans, Euskarians, Indo-Germanic or Celtindic peoples, and peoples of the Caucasus. These peoples are all white; and Dr. Brinton thinks we may also say of them, "hair wavy, nose narrow." But the differences by which they are separated from one another are, at least in some cases, so profound, that it is extremely doubtful whether we are warranted in attributing to them a common origin, except in the wide sense in which a common origin is attributed to humanity generally. So long, however, as Dr. Brinton's classification is understood to be merely a convenient way of bringing together great masses of facts, it may be of considerable service to students. The book embodies the results of much careful research, and is written in a clear and vigorous style.

NO. 1128, VOL. 44]

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR.

[The Editor does not hold himself responsible for opinions expressed by his correspondents. Neither can he undertake to return, or to correspond with the writers of, rejected manuscripts intended for this or any other part of NATURE. No notice is taken of anonymous communications.]

Crystals of Platinum.

SINCE writing a note on this subject to NATURE (vol. xliii. p. 541) I have found that it is by no means requisite to use topaz in order to obtain crystals of platinum from a ribbon of that metal heated by a current. Thus the ribbon may be dusted over with quartz dust, and if the temperature be raised to that at which this is slowly melting (1430° C. about), crystals of platinum gather upon projecting points on the quartz. Doubtless the presence of fluorine will facilitate, as described in my former letter, the volatilization of the platinum, but there is little doubt that at a temperature some 300° below its melting-point (1750°; Violle) there is a slow volatilization of the metal due either to heat pure and simple, or to this in conjunction with the presence of a current as in high vacua.

To put the possibility of chemical action out of the question, I weighed a clean ribbon of pure platinum, 9 centimetres in length, and passed such a current through it, for 30 minutes, as raised it to nearly the melting-point of palladium (1500°; Violle). The first weighing was 0.0700 grammes, the second (after heating) 0.0688, indicating a loss of 1.7 per cent. of its weight.

I find that Prof. A. S. Törnebohm, of Stockholm, has described in a recently-published paper (*Aftryck ur Geol. Fören. i Stockholm Förhandl.*, Bd. 13, Häft 2, 1891) cubical crystals of platinum formed by the action of chlorine gas upon platinum black at a high temperature. The figures illustrating his paper depict crystals similar to those obtained by the present method.

J. JOLY.

Physical Laboratory, Trinity College, Dublin.

Porpoises in the Victoria Nyanza.

IN Dr. Carl Peters's "New Light on Dark Africa," he speaks of "some large gray-bellied porpoises tumbling about" in Lake Victoria Nyanza, "and rollicking in the tepid flood" (see p. 445).

I should be glad to know whether there is any other authority for the occurrence of a Cetacean in this lake. It is possible, but very improbable, as no Cetaceans are known to occur in the Nile, or other African fresh waters, although there has been a report of the Manatee being found in the Shâri, which runs into Lake Tchad (see Barth, "Reisen," iii. p. 289), and the Manatee also occurs in the Niger.

P. L. SCLATER.

The Zoological Station at Naples.

IT is desirable that the names of any biologists who wish to make use of the British Association Table at the Naples Zoological Station, during the year commencing in September next, should be in the possession of the Committee before the meeting of the British Association at Cardiff.

Intending applicants are therefore requested to send in their names, and a statement of the nature of the work they propose to undertake, before June 30, to me as Secretary to the Committee.

W. PERCY SLADEN.

13 Hyde Park Gate, S.W., June 6.

A BRITISH INSTITUTE OF PREVENTIVE MEDICINE.

ON Friday, June 5, Sir Michael Hicks-Beach received in one of the large rooms of the Victoria Hotel, Northumberland Avenue, an unusually numerous and influential deputation on behalf of the British Institute of Preventive Medicine. Sir Michael Hicks-Beach was accompanied by Sir Henry Calcraft, K.C.B., Secretary to the Board of Trade, Mr. Courtenay Boyle, C.B., and Mr. Walter J. Howell.

Among the members of the deputation were the Duke of Westminster, the Earl of Feversham, Sir Frederick Abel, Sir F. Bramwell, Sir John Lubbock, Sir Benjamin