

new matter and of the theories based upon it by Drs. Epping and Strassmaier convinced him of the general correctness of the results of his own investigations, at which he had arrived by a method peculiarly his own, and by many new readings of the cuneiform names of planets and stars which he was enabled to explain satisfactorily he confirmed several identifications of stars which had been pointed out by Dr. Epping by the light of mathematical astronomy. It is but fair to say that at the outset some differences of opinion existed between these distinguished scholars, but already many of them have been adjusted, and the proof of the general accuracy of the work is therefore much stronger.

Prof. Jensen divides his book into two sections. In the first he treats of the "Universe and its Parts," and in the second of the "Creation and of the Formation of the World." Under the first heading, in a series of chapters, he discusses the sky and the heavenly bodies in it, special attention being paid to the consideration of the Zodiac, the earth, the Mountain of sunrise, the abodes of the blessed dead and of the damned, and of the Okeanos; and under the second he translates and explains the Babylonian texts referring to the Creation and to the Deluge. Many of Prof. Jensen's ideas are new, and will therefore fail to be accepted by those who prefer to follow traditions and their own views in preference to results obtained directly from the cuneiform texts which are, after all, our only trustworthy authority on Babylonian cosmology. He argues his propositions in a sober manner, and he arranges his facts with clearness; he gives proof or authority for every statement, and he assumes or takes for granted little or nothing. Prof. Jensen's book is a careful statement of all the important views of the Babylonians concerning the system of the heavens and the earth as recorded by the official astronomers and astrologers attached to the library of Assurbanipal at Nineveh about B.C. 660. His work will command the respect and earn the gratitude of all true scholars, even of those who may disagree with him, and by reason of it the scientific astronomer of to-day with his telescope and spectroscope and instruments for stellar photography will respect his predecessors on the plains of Mesopotamia, who differ from him in their calculation of the length of the average period between new-moon and new-moon by two-fifths of a second only!

OUR BOOK SHELF.

Elements of Physiography. By Hugh Dickie, LL.D. Collins Science Series. (London: Collins.)

THIS is a small manual designedly written as a text-book for the elementary stage of physiography, according to the syllabus of the Science and Art Department. All that is necessary for this stage is treated of within its pages in as concise and brief a manner as possible.

Interspersed amongst the text are upwards of 100 excellent illustrations and four coloured maps, and very good sets of questions for exercise are inserted at the end of each chapter.

The author would do well to be a little more precise and accurate in some of his statements. In Article 150, p. 138, he says: "The position of a star in the sky is fixed as follows:—(1) Its angular distance E. or W. of the line passing through the poles." Which particular

one of the infinite number of lines passing through the poles is meant is not very clear. He should have "fixed" the line by adding "and the zenith." At the end of Article 154 he states that "comets and nebulae are bodies less dense in their composition than stars, and more erratic in their movements." Surely the author should know that nebulae do not appear to wander about amongst the stars, but keep the same relative position with respect to the latter.

Upon the whole, however, the book, which is moderate in price, can be recommended to pupils preparing for the examination in elementary physiography.

Seventh Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology to the Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, 1885-86. By J. W. Powell, Director. (Washington: Government Printing Office.)

THE Report which occupies the first part of this handsome volume is too old to be read with much interest. Happily it is accompanied by papers which are of more than passing value. One of these—on Indian linguistic families of America north of Mexico—is by Prof. J. W. Powell, who, in the course of an elaborate discussion and exposition, throws much light on an intricate and most difficult subject. A paper by Mr. W. J. Hoffman on the Mide'wiwin or "grand medicine society" of the Ojibwa, will be read with pleasure by students of anthropology; and Mr. James Mooney devotes a very careful and interesting paper to the consideration of the sacred formulas of the Cherokees.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR.

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A Remarkable Rainfall.

I SEND a few particulars of the recent remarkable rainfall at Crohamhurst, situated on the western slope of Mont Blanc, a peak on a spur of the D'Aguiar Range, an offset from the Blackall Ranges, South Eastern Queensland. The whole of this district is watered by the Stanley River, a tributary of the Brisbane River, and hence the values given below were prominent factors in producing the terrible floods from which we have suffered. I may mention that the observer at Crohamhurst is Mr. Inigo Owen Jones, one of my specially trained assistants, and that implicit reliance can be placed on his figures.

The following are the more remarkable falls of the flood period at Crohamhurst:—For 24 hours ending 9 a.m. February 1, 10'775 inches; ditto February 2, 20'056 inches; ditto February 3, 35'714 inches; ditto February 4, 10'760 inches. The gauge is a standard of the "eight-inch" pattern, standing one foot above the ground at an altitude of about 1400 feet above mean sea level. The approximate latitude and longitude of Crohamhurst are 26° 50' S. 152° 55' E. The gauge was emptied every three hours, night and day, on the occasion of the greatest fall. I think meteorologists will agree that for a 24 hours' fall we have beaten the world's record. CLEMENT L. WRAGGE, Government Meteorologist of Queensland (late of Ben Nevis). Brisbane, March 22.

The Cold Wave at Hongkong, January 1893.—Its After Effects.

Now that the cold wave has completely passed away and warm weather is setting in (March 17, 1893), one can write more certainly respecting the effects upon animal and vegetable life.

With regard to the plants the effect has been disastrous, especially on the higher levels, and were it not that our rarest plants descend the hillsides, and often occur in sheltered nooks, this year's frost would have caused the extinction of several of them. Combined with the dry weather we have been enduring the frost has turned our fairly green island into a brown, desert-looking land, much of the undergrowth being dead. Most of the leaves have fallen, even new leaves that were unfolding have