

ally assimilated into Prof. Herdman's general scheme—all of which would be entertaining enough on a warm afternoon in summer, when we lay on some grassy cliff within sound of the sea, but is, it must be confessed, a little trying to busy individuals anxious to arrive at the kernel of the business in hand.

Of the supplementary reports in parts iii. and iv. the most important is probably Prof. Dendy's monograph on the sponges, which occupies some two hundred pages and is illustrated with sixteen plates. Prof. Dendy describes 146 species from Prof. Herdman's collection, of which 77 are new, and he considers that the most striking feature of the sponge-fauna of Ceylon, next to its richness, is its close relationship with that of Australia and the adjacent islands. On the other hand, it differs considerably from the sponge-fauna of the Red Sea, as well as from that of the south and east coasts of Africa.

In the case of the Aleyoniidæ, on the other hand, Prof. Arthur Thomson notes that there is a great difference between the Ceylon collections and those made off the Maldives by Mr. Gardiner and off New Britain and New Guinea by Dr. Willey.

It is impossible to refer in detail to all the memoirs in these volumes, which contain descriptions of a great number of new or little-known species, and it would be premature to attempt to anticipate the general discussion on the fauna of Ceylon which Prof. Herdman promises for the concluding part of the report. All the memoirs are well illustrated with a number of lithographic plates, of which the very beautiful series accompanying Mr. E. T. Browne's account of the Medusæ may be specially mentioned as doing credit to artist and lithographer alike.

#### THE ABORIGINES OF UNEXPLORED NEW GUINEA.<sup>1</sup>

**I**N this work Mr. A. E. Pratt gives an account of the time he, with his son, a youth of seventeen, spent in New Guinea collecting zoological specimens during the years 1901-3. A short visit was paid to the Dutch settlement of Merauke, newly established among the Tugeri tribes of Netherlands New Guinea to check the raids into British territory of these enterprising savages, but owing to the unsettled condition of the country no attempt to leave the settlement was made. Mr. Pratt then shifted his quarters to Port Moresby, in British territory, whence moving to Yule Island he organised his expeditions to the mountainous hinterland of the Mekeo district of the Central Division, where almost the whole of his time was spent and where his collections were principally made. A large number of new Lepidoptera, a new fish, and a couple of new reptiles rewarded Mr. Pratt's efforts; but although the object of the expedition was to collect zoological and botanical specimens, Mr. Pratt devotes little space in his book to natural history, its bulk being given to a gossipy description of the author's journeyings, with remarks, too often inaccurate, on the natives he came in contact with.

Mr. Pratt on p. 291 points out that he "cannot pretend to be a trained ethnologist . . ." while his "notes, too, were fragmentary . . . owing to the stress of . . . journeyings and the pressure of work . . ."

In these circumstances it is easy to forgive the omission of any mention of many problems of the greatest interest, e.g. the provenance of the Mekeo stone adze and "pineapple" club, upon which some

light might have been thrown in the country visited by Mr. Pratt in his furthest journeys; but, reasonable as are these claims to consideration and forbearance, and difficult and trying as the present writer knows the Mekeo hinterland to be, they do not palliate the publication of such a mass of misstatements and inaccuracies as occur in this book, and are absolutely no excuse for such apparent "faking" of photographs or drawings as produce the ridiculous results shown in the plates facing pp. 168, 262, and 268.

Again, with a perversity that is as determined as it is misplaced, in the map given at the beginning of the volume a number of such well-known Mekeo villages as Aipiana, Inawi, and Rarai are bodily transferred from the right to the left bank of the St. Joseph River, to which Nara village is shifted some twenty miles northwards of its actual site.

Certain of the more glaring inaccuracies in print and picture may now be specified.

The description on p. 71 of Motu pot-making is inaccurate, nor are "several hundred large dug-out canoes brought together and moored side by side at the landing stages in groups of six or seven" (p. 72) to form the lakatoi used on the annual Motu trading expedition to the Papuan Gulf. The present writer has seen many Motu dances, and in 1903 watched the departures of a number of lakatoi from Port Moresby, but certainly never saw a Motu girl "spin round with a dizzying rapidity," and finds it difficult to believe that Mr. Pratt did; while Mr. Pratt's statement is not borne out by the plate, obviously a photograph, he quotes in support of it.

The plate facing p. 168, with its attached legend, "A piebald tribe: The Motu-Motu people of Hoods Bay . . ." constitutes perhaps the most grotesquely erroneous statement in the book, and is not unworthy of an imaginative traveller of the fifteenth century. The plate shows two natives, irregularly spotted with patches of white, wearing a form of perineal bandage which is not worn at Hulaa or anywhere on the Hood Peninsula; and the accompanying letterpress is scarcely less frankly imaginative; "the piebald people are one of the mysteries of New Guinea," says Mr. Pratt, "and their origin is unexplained." The origin of a piebald tribe in Hood Bay is pretty obviously in the fertile imagination of the author, who calls the tribe he has brought into existence the Motu-Motu, this as a matter of fact being the Motu name for the Toaripi of the Papuan Gulf living about 150 miles west of Hood Bay.

Of course "albinos," though they never have pink eyes, occur sporadically all over New Guinea, and are particularly abundant at Hulaa, where there are at least four of these "albinotic" individuals. But apart from elderly folk, in whom leucoderma of the hands and feet, spreading to the forearm and leg, is by no means rare all over British New Guinea, the writer, who has twice visited Hulaa, knows of but one case of partial albinism, a child of about eight years of age belonging to the Sinaugolo, a tribe in no way closely related to the Hulaa folk.

The astounding and wildly unnatural plates which face pp. 262 and 268 cannot be passed without remark. A glance at the latter plate will convince anyone that it represents no tropical jungle, while the whole story of the fishing-nets spun by spiders on bamboo loops erected for this purpose in the jungle, which these two plates illustrate, seems to be a far-off reminiscence of the kite-fishing with a bait of spider's web which skips along the surface of the water practised in the D'Entrecasteaux and other archipelagoes off south-eastern British New Guinea. There are many other inaccuracies and misstatements in the

<sup>1</sup> "Two Years among New Guinea Cannibals." By A. E. Pratt, with Notes and Observations by his Son, H. Pratt. Pp. 360; illustrated. (London: Seeley and Co., Ltd., 1906.) Price 16s. net.

book which for lack of space must pass unnoticed, but the above are probably the most glaring examples.

After such defects as have been discussed it seems almost hypercritical to mention minor blemishes, but it may be pointed out that proper names are often misspelt, and this is the case even with the names of such well-known New Guinea worthies as the Rev. Dr. Lawes. The frequency with which such slips occur suggests that the author may again be travelling, or at any rate that he has not had the opportunity of revising his book. The get-up of the book is

NATURE, and references are given to them in the sub-joined summary of the official catalogue.

*Mr. T. E. Heath*: Stereoscopic star charts and spectroscopic key maps.—*Rev. A. L. Cortie*: Photographs of the solar corona, 1905, August 30, taken at Vinaroz, Spain, with a 4-inch lens and 20-feet coronagraph.—*The Solar Physics Observatory, South Kensington*: (1) Photographs illustrating the eclipse camp at Palma, Majorca (August 30, 1905), and some of the results obtained. (2) Examples of stellar spectra taken with the 6-inch two-prism prismatic camera. (3) Some photographs taken with the spectro-

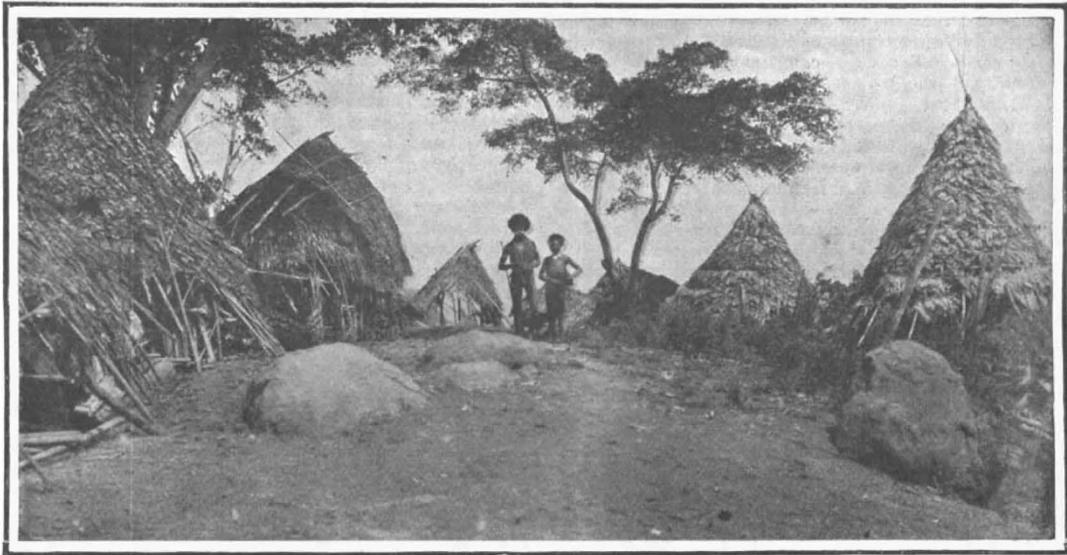


FIG. 1.—The native village of Dinawa. From "Two Years among New Guinea Cannibals."

good, and where the plates are not imaginative they are often interesting, as is the case with those facing pp. 108, 120, 144, 176, 236, and 244.

C. G. SELIGMANN.

#### THE ROYAL SOCIETY CONVERSAZIONE.

ON Wednesday of last week, May 9, there was a large assembly at the Royal Society on the occasion of the first of the two conversazioni held annually in the society's rooms at Burlington House. The guests were received by the president, Lord Rayleigh, and included, not only leading men of science, but also representatives of other branches of intellectual activity and national interests. There were numerous exhibits of objects and apparatus illustrating recent scientific work, and the following notes will give an indication of their character. Descriptions relating to exhibits belonging to the same departments of science have so far as possible been brought together. During the evening lantern demonstrations were given by Mr. G. W. Lamplugh, F.R.S., on the Batoka gorge of the Zambezi river, and by Prof. S. P. Thompson, F.R.S., on the electric production of nitrates from the atmosphere. For an account of the Batoka gorge reference should be made to a paper by Mr. Lamplugh in NATURE of November 30, 1905 (vol. lxxiii., p. 111); and the subject of Prof. Thompson's lecture will be found dealt with in NATURE of February 8, 1906 (vol. lxxiii., p. 355), and p. 65 of the present number. In several other cases descriptions of instruments and other objects exhibited have already appeared in the columns of

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heliograph. These include a "disc" photograph taken on August 31, 1905, the day after the total solar eclipse of that year. (4) Curves to illustrate long-period barometric changes in operation in India, East Indies, Australia, and South America. They show the possible evolution of the nineteen-year variation in Australia from the eleven-year (about) variation in India, and the relation of the Australian to the South American changes. (5) Photographs and diagrams illustrating recent work done on the orientation of some British stone circles.—*The Royal Astronomical Society*: Six photographs of the Milky Way taken in 1905 by Prof. E. E. Barnard at Mount Wilson, California.—*The Astronomer Royal*: Photographic prints of the total solar eclipse of 1905, August 30, from negatives taken at Sfax, Tunisia.—*The Director, Meteorological Office*: (1) Antarctic meteorological records with charts and diagrams prepared in connection with the discussion of the results of the Antarctic expeditions. (2) Some recent meteorological results. (a) Meteorological charts of the Indian Ocean and Red Sea for the month of May, showing average winds, currents, and other meteorological information, including a reproduction of the chart for May of the tracks of hurricanes prepared by the late Mr. C. Meldrum, F.R.S. The chart is the first of a monthly series to be issued by the Meteorological Office for the use of seamen. (b) Diagram exhibiting the relation between Admiral Beaufort's numbers for wind force and the corresponding wind velocity and wind pressure.

*Mr. R. Kerr*: A torsion spring for transference of energy. (Exhibited on behalf of Prof. L. R. Wilberforce, of University College, Liverpool).—*Mr. Joseph Goold*: Vibration experiments. Two distinct systems of vibration in the same steel plate are tuned closely to the same pitch. When either system is excited the other also becomes active; and their respective intensities go through a variety of fluctuations, producing remarkable disturbances of the compound node-lines.—*Prof. G. Forbes, F.R.S.*: Model of naval gun-