

servatory of Belgium, under the auspices of which both were prepared and published, is to be congratulated upon having performed an exceedingly useful, if tedious, duty.

As any attempt to separate magnetism and seismology would have led to needless duplication and confusion, the arrangement is purely alphabetical. For each station are given the geographical position, the altitude, the nature of the ground on which the observatory stands, the publications wherein the results appear, the names of the staff, a brief history of the observatory, and the nature and distance of any disturbing elements, such as tramways, &c., and, finally, a description of the instruments and the special researches to which they are dedicated. Other lists show the continental and national distribution of the two kinds of observatories, and, alphabetically, the names of the observers.

Such a list was to have been prepared by the International Commission for Terrestrial Magnetism, but the project failed; the data then collected, however, have been placed at the service of the compilers of the present work, and have proved very useful.

W. E. R.

*An Inconsistent Preliminary Objection against Positivism.* By Prof. Robert Ardigo. Translated by Emilio Gavirati. Pp. 52. (Cambridge: W. Heffer and Sons, Ltd., 1910.) Price 1s. net.

THIS pamphlet, by the veteran leader of Italian positivism, is issued in translation by a devoted admirer and disciple who wishes to find an English helper in the translation and publication of other works by the "great master." Its argument is directed against those opponents who, on behalf of modern idealism, contend that in positivism there is to be found this fundamental fault—namely, that, according to the method which the positivist has prescribed to himself, the subject ought, in his system, to become an object which cannot have, therefore, any of the characteristics belonging to subjectiveness. Prof. Ardigo, as St. George to the dragon of metaphysics, develops a subtle and closely reasoned argument for a positivist treatment of psychology, criticising the positions associated with the names of Bergson and Boutroux. He is also careful to show that positivism differs widely from materialism, with which there is—very naturally—a tendency to confound it. The substance of this pamphlet is contained in the second part of volume x. of Ardigo's "Philosophical Works."

*Analytical Chemistry.* By Prof. F. P. Treadwell. Authorised translation from the German by William T. Hall. Vol. ii. Quantitative Analysis. Second edition. Pp. x+787. (New York: John Wiley and Sons; London: Chapman and Hall, Ltd., 1910.) Price 17s. net.

A REVIEW of the first edition of Mr. Hall's translation of Prof. Treadwell's work on quantitative analysis was published in NATURE of August 11, 1904 (vol. lxx., p. 341). In the present issue certain additions have been made which are not found in the German text, and the main part of the work has been compared with the fourth German edition.

*Students' Life and Work in the University of Cambridge.* Two lectures by Prof. Karl Breul. Revised edition. Pp. 60. (Cambridge: Bowes and Bowes, 1910.) Price 1s. net.

THE two lectures delivered by Prof. Karl Breul to the students attending the University Extension summer meeting in 1908 give an interesting and informative account of the life and work of Cambridge undergraduates. In the revised edition a few corrections and additions have been made.

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## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR.

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### Early Burial Customs in Egypt.

ALL who are interested in the serious attempts that are being made to reconstruct the real history of ancient Egypt and to sift established truth from wild conjecture must deplore Prof. Flinders Petrie's attempt (see NATURE of September 29, p. 401) to revivify the corpse of a belief in the supposition that the archaic Egyptians were in the habit of cutting up their dead, a view which has been so effectually hanged, drawn, and quartered during the last ten years.

When Prof. Petrie states (*op. cit.*, p. 401, quoted from *Man*, September) that "it has long been known that in prehistoric burials the corpse was stripped of its flesh, the bones even being broken to extract the marrow," he should have written that he and M. de Morgan had stated that the prehistoric Egyptians dissected the bodies of their dead. But, even though Profs. Maspero, Sayce, Wiedemann, and Lortet repeated these or similar statements (Sayce and Lortet invoking the aid of birds of prey to do the bone-cleaning!), the experience gained by other excavators has totally shattered and destroyed every scrap of evidence that could lend any support to the belief in the reality of such practices.

In 1896 Prof. Petrie ("Naqada and Ballas," p. 32) attempted to explain the disturbed condition of the skeletons found in many archaic Egyptian graves by saying "that bodies were sometimes—with all respect—cut up and partly eaten"!

Four years later Dr. George A. Reisner proved that such disturbances of the bones as Prof. Petrie mentioned were the result of the operations of grave-plunderers (see the Egyptian Exploration Fund's Archæological Report for 1900-1, p. 25); and every year since then this explanation has been proved to be true in every case where disturbances have been found amongst many thousands of burials of all ages and in every part of Egypt and Nubia, which have been submitted to the most thorough and critical examination, not only by Dr. Reisner himself, but also of many independent witnesses. The evidence referring to Nubia is set forth *in extenso* in the First Annual Report of the Archæological Survey of Nubia, which is being published in Cairo this month. During my ten years' association with Dr. Reisner, my collaborators in the anatomical branch of the work and I have examined and made notes on the remains of more than 15,000 human beings buried in the Nile Valley, and we have not seen a single case which afforded any evidence whatsoever of the practices postulated by Prof. Petrie.

Secondary burials, of course, occurred in ancient Egypt; but they were exceedingly rare, probably more so than in modern England. Perhaps some archæologist of the next millennium will find infinitely more evidence in English graveyards of the twentieth century in support of speculations on our "customs of mutilation of corpses and cannibalism" than Prof. Petrie has been able to gather in Egypt.

It would, indeed, be a matter for astonishment if such a people as the ancient Egyptians, whose respect for their dead is proverbial, did not attempt to restore to order the graves of relatives that had been desecrated by grave-plunderers. The surprising thing is not that we find instances of reburial, but that they are so exceedingly rare.

During the Græco-Roman period in Egypt and Nubia, when the decadence of the art of mummification had definitely begun, it often happened that bodies handed over to the embalmers were treated in such a careless manner that they fell to pieces in an early stage of the process, and had to be rebuilt—sometimes with limb-bones reversed, leg-bones as skeletons for arms, portions of other skeletons introduced, and often foreign materials added. This "faking" of mummies is described in detail in the forthcoming Report of the Archæological Survey of Nubia: