frequent appearance in the tattoo marks and religious customs of the Haida and other Indians of the north-west coast of America.

The author, not confining himself to the group of the Samoan islands in his forty years' experience, made notes upon the cults and customs of twenty-three other islands in the Pacific Ocean, which are published in this volume. Among these, with reference to the island Nukufetau, is found a singular reversal of the premium on families given by Roman law, and the merit generally attributed, in communities untaught by Malthus, to the production of numerous offspring. Infanticide there was the law of the land. Only one child was allowed to a family. Under special circumstances, and by paying a fine, a second might be allowed to live.

On the whole, and in general terms, without further attempt at quotation, the volume can be strongly recommended as being illustrative of the stage of ethnic life comprehended in it, and as almost above criticism.

THE HOME RAMBLES OF AN AMERICAN NATURALIST.

A naturalist's rambles about home. By C. C. Abbott. New York, *Appleton*, 1884. 485 p. 12°.

It is not often that one can sit down and become so absorbed in a book that he ceases to be critical. It is in this condition that we lay down Dr. Abbott's charming volume. We do not know whether some of his statements need qualifying or not. We do know, however, that the author is an accurate observer, and, furthermore, that he lives amid the scenes and experiences so graphically described. The three beeches, woodshed, fences, etc., do exist, and belong to Dr. Abbott's homestead. The author has been known to the reading public for many years by his articles in the *Popular science monthly*, *American naturalist*, and *Science*. He is more widely known by his being the first to discover paleolithic implements in North America, and as the author of the work entitled 'Primitive industry.'

The present book is, as the title indicates, the rambles of a naturalist about home. The sights and scenes are so well depicted with pen that illustrations are not needed, and the author has had the good sense not to attempt them. Nothing but a sensitive-plate, timed to the fraction of a second, would be of any use in such service. Speaking of a white weasel, he says, 'It fell into the hands of a taxidermist, and was lost to science.' Such a fate often awaits the exploits he describes when they fall into the hands of an artist.

Many new and interesting facts are given concerning the habits of wild animals, and at the same time he corrects a host of erroneous observations that have gone unchallenged for many years, because no one competent for the work has given the time and patience necessary to the study. His glimpses of wildcats, and the fight between a turtle and mink, are curious experiences, and his observations of the skunk are extremely interesting. He alludes to the peculiar power of the skunk as causing an 'atmospheric disturbance'! The rapidity with which a skunk burrows in the ground is quite a new fact. He shows how untrustworthy most weather-lore is, as based on the habits of animals, though he admits that chipmunks appear to foresee the occurrence of a cold rain twenty-four hours in advance. He also shows — it seems to us conclusively — that the opossum does not 'play possum,' and that its supposed power of feigning death is the result of paralysis from fear.

He believes that the gambols and antics and various curious behaviors of animals are evidences of play and fun, as in children, and that in no other way can such behavior be explained. Even among fishes has he observed movements that must be referable to the same desire. We can commend the book most heartily to all lovers of nature. It is a book to be put into the hands of every boy, and we should like to see it adopted in our schools as an occasional reading-book.

THE LIFE OF ELLEN WATSON.

A record of Ellen Watson. Arranged and edited by Anna Buckland. London, *Macmillan*, 1884. 6+279 p. 8°.

Ellen Watson's claim to remembrance does not rest upon what she did, but upon the promise she gave of what she might have done had her life been longer. At the age of twenty she entered University college as the first woman-student in mathematics and physics. Professor Clifford soon formed a very high opinion of her mathematical ability, and believed that she possessed a rare faculty for original work. In the examination which was held at the end of the year, he was careful not to allow his judgment to be influenced by the fact of her youth and sex; and the most strict examination of her papers gave her the highest number of marks gained by any of the class, and placed her in the position of first