deduce valuable facts with regard to Mexican history from the stone; but for further details we must refer to the lecture of Dr. Valentini, published by the American antiquarian society.

The first book printed in Cambridge, Mass., was an almanac, that the wise men of New England might not lead unguided lives; but no copy of the book is known to exist. We give, however, the title-page of an almanac published in 1785 in Boston, which shows the maker taking the altitude of a star with a cross-stick, which is nothing more than a cross-piece sliding upon a graduated stick, the observer bringing one end of the cross-piece on a line with his eye and the horizon, and the other end on a line with his eye and the star.

Almanacs contained considerable trashy information up to the early part of this century, when the British almanac and companion were published in 1827. The British almanac aimed to give a reliable calendar, and a vast amount of information which is generally hidden in census reports. It has been followed by Whitaker, giving similar information for the whole world, and by the American almanac, more especially devoted to American affairs. So it will be seen that the almanac first gave rules by which one might know every thing, and ended by telling us every thing we know.

EXPLORATION OF PUTNAM RIVER, ALASKA.

THE Ounalaska (Lieut. G. M. Stoney, U.S.N., commanding) arrived in San Francisco, Oct. 25, having completed the exploration of Putnam River so far as the time allotted would permit. The river was explored by a steam-launch three hundred miles, when rapids were encountered; then a canoe was taken, and towed by hand about eighty miles farther; and from this point a short portage brought a portion of the party to the head waters of one of the northern tributaries, which was fed by two large lakes. A mountain near one of these lakes furnished a view far to the eastward, up the main valley of Putnam River, and showed it flowing in undiminished volume as far as the eye could reach. The natives reported, that seven days' journey farther up the river there was a great lake, looking like a sea; and it is thought that this is the source of the river. There is little doubt that the river has its origin as far east as the British possessions, and probably near to the Mackenzie.

Putnam River empties into Hotham Inlet just north of Selawik Lake and to the south-east of Kunatuk River. There is a large delta at its mouth stretching back about forty miles, which is pierced by over one hundred channels, one of which is about one mile in width. The river is navigable to boats drawing from five to six feet of water, up to the rapids. Here the water flows at about ten knots per hour. The river and most of its tributaries lie within the arctic circle. Most of the tributaries are from the north, and they are generally shallow but rapid-flowing, while the water is very cold; in some instances the observed temperature being 38°, while in one case it was 33°. Only one considerable branch was found flowing from the southward. This is called the Pah River by the natives, and it is used by them in journeying to the south; for a very short portage from its source enables them to reach one of the northern tributaries of the Yukon River, and they are thus brought in easy communication with the trading-posts. It is believed that like easy portage can be made from the Putnam to the river discovered by Lieut. Ray near Point Barrow, and which empties into the Arctic Ocean.

The country about the Putnam is mountainous. Long ranges extend along either side; but they are peculiar in existing in small, detached groups, each of which possesses distinguishing characteristics, some being clearly defined, sharp, rocky peaks, while others are smoothly rounded. The higher ones are estimated at about three thousand feet. From the tops of those which were ascended, the whole country to the north appeared to be a confused mass of mountain peaks, and the natives stated that the country was of the same character to the Arctic Ocean.

The country explored was found to possess a warm and agreeable summer climate, the thermometer having reached 115° in the sun, while the nights were cool. The valley of the Putnam is heavily timbered with spruce, birch, cottonwood, larch, and willow; while flowers were in abundance, roses being seen in large numbers. Cuttings of these latter, together with specimens of coal, gold, and copper, and a huge fossil trunk, form a part of the material collected for the Smithsonian institution.

While Lieut. Stoney was absent, Ensign Purcell remained with two men in charge of the schooner, and made a survey of Hotham Inlet and the Selawik. He found that the Selawik River represented on the charts has no existence; but there is a channel, six miles in length, connecting Selawik Lake with a chain of three lakes to the eastward. He also found a five-fathom channel over the Hotham-inlet bar.

The Ounalaska is a fifty-four ton schooner, and Lieut. Stoney was provided with two officers and a crew of eight men. There were no naturalists with the expedition.

While returning from his expedition, Lieut. Stoney encountered several severe gales. During one of the most severe he employed oil for stilling the waves, with marked success. The oil was rigged upon a spar to which a drag was attached, and the vessel was so manoeuvred that the drag stood off the weather-bow. The vessel holding the oil was so constructed that the oil was forced out in portions by each advancing wave. All the waves were affected by the oil, but the great foaming combers most markedly.

THE BIRD-COLLECTION OF THE U. S. NATIONAL MUSEUM.

IN the register of specimens belonging to the bird department of the National museum, which records