

GEOGRAPHICAL NEWS.

M. DE LESSEPS, on his arrival at Paris, reiterated the assertion that the Panama canal will be opened in 1889, "even if the most difficult part of the cutting is not then complete." He added, that the portion then navigable will demonstrate that the original calculations were well founded.

The latest rumors about the Kongo are, that the station at Stanley Falls (the highest station established by Stanley) has been abandoned, owing to the continued hostility of the Arab slave-traders.

English capitalists having definitely decided to have nothing to do with the proposed Kongo railway, it is stated that a committee has been formed in Brussels to proceed to the Kongo and decide upon the feasibility of the project on the spot.

There are so many travellers now exploring the central portion of Asia, that it is extremely difficult to keep track of them. Dr. Radde arrived at Sarakhs on the 22d of July, after a successful journey through the now familiar regions of Merv, Penjdeh, Meruchak, Zulfikar, Askabad. Thence he repaired to Tiflis, where he arrived in the early part of September. As might have been expected, he suffered severely from the heat.

Two Frenchmen, MM. Capus and Bonvalot, traversed a portion of the same ground, spending a whole month in Merv. They reported the moving sand-hills, or 'Barchaus,' to be great obstacles to the construction of the Transcaspian railway. Their intention, when last heard from, was to search for a route to Balkh *via* the Amu-Daria. Thence they would attempt to reach Kafiristan over the Hindu Kush, hoping to find a pass free from snow, notwithstanding the lateness of the season. They have since been captured by the Afghans, and are now in close confinement.

There is a clear and valuable account of the recent troubles in Afghanistan, from a Russian point of view, in the *London Times* for Nov. 1 and 12. This purports to be a translation of a synopsis of a Russian 'blue-book.' It appeared originally in the *Journal de St. Petersbourg*.

The officers in charge of the Indian survey have already surveyed Burma from Mandalay southward along the Irawaddy as far as Pagan. It is probable that a rough sketch-map of upper Burma on a quarter-inch scale will be published before long.

Among recent school-maps we note 'The British empire on a uniform scale of 107 geographical miles to an inch,' by William Shaw (London, Philip & Son). Naturally the most extensive limits have been assigned to the British possessions; and this in some cases, as in Africa, to the great injury of other colonial powers. Alto-

gether, the map, though useful, reflects scant credit on its author.

A good statement of the present condition of the British colonies, from the side of the colonies themselves, is 'Her majesty's colonies: a series of original papers issued under the authority of the royal commission.' The introduction is by Seeley, whose 'Expansion of England' has introduced him to a host of readers.

Determined to be up with the times, the geographers of Australasia have formed a geographical society, which has flourished so luxuriantly that a branch society, restricted to South Australia, has already put forth its first volume of Proceedings.

THE TRAINING OF THE MEMORY.

SYSTEMS of mnemonics are exceedingly numerous, and the number of persons who have discovered "the quickest and best way to acquire a perfect memory" is legion. Every once in a while some new and absurd book on the training of the memory is foisted upon the public, and each has its dupes. The trouble with them all is the same, — ignorance of the physiological conditions of memory, and a very inaccurate acquaintance with psychology. Therefore we must plead guilty to the possession of a prejudice against any book on the education of the memory. It was with this prejudice that we took up Dr. Holbrook's little book;¹ but the perusal of the preface and the introductory sections alone proved that for once at least a prejudice against books on training the memory was unfounded. Dr. Holbrook writes with a physiological and psychological knowledge of his subject, and he treats it in a plain, straightforward, common-sense way. After showing the physiological basis of memory, he draws the practical conclusion that robust health, a well-nourished brain, and a healthy nervous system are the normal physiological conditions of a good memory. The psychological conditions are strict attention to sensory impressions, repetitions of them, and the formation of chains of association for them. The value of association may be tested by any one who is foolish enough to doubt it, by making the test given by Dr. Holbrook on p. 113, quoted from Dr. Pick's work on training the memory. We ourselves have tried it with several persons, and found it a most excellent and practical illustration. The practice of making notes of important matters is adverted to and commended, even if the notes are at once thrown away, because the process of writing the fact, name, or date down increases our attention to it,

¹ *How to strengthen the memory.* By M. L. HOLBROOK, M.D. New York, Holbrook, 1886. 12°.