— The annual meeting of the American Society for Psychical Research was held in Boston last week. After the opening remarks, Dr. Minot introduced Prof. H. P. Bowditch, who presented the report of the committee on thought transferrence. "Among the conditions possibly favorable to thought transferrence, supposing it to be a genuine phenomenon, the effect of a sudden and unexpected impression made on the mind of the agent seemed particularly worthy of investigation. For this purpose experiments were made in which a brilliantly illuminated figure or diagram could be suddenly displayed to the agent while sitting in a darkened room. The chairman of this committee, Mr. Hodgson, and Dr. W. S. Bigelow took part in these experiments, which were twenty or thirty in number, and conducted on different days in the month of July last. As absolutely no evidence of thought transferrence was obtained, the details of the experiments may be omitted. The suggestion made in the last report of this committee, that a drug might be discovered which by its action on the cerebral centres might favor thought transferrence, seemed also worth testing. For this purpose experiments were tried, with Mr. Hodgson acting both as agent and percipient while partially under the influence of ether, but the results differed in no respect from those obtained when he was in the normal state." In some other experiments made by Mr. Hodgson, Professor Bowditch added, there was a degree of success which warranted a continuation of the investigation. "It will be evident to those who have followed the work of the American Society thus far, that the attempt to obtain evidence as to the reality of 'thought transferrence' has been attended with very meagre results. If thought transferrence be a genuine psychological phenomenon, it is evident that the conditions favorable to its manifestation are not generally understood. Judging from our experience thus far, it would seem that an inquiring attitude of mind is certainly not one of these favoring circumstances." Other interesting reports to which the audience listened were those of the committee on experimental psychology, by Dr. Minot; the committee on apparitions and haunted houses, by Prof. Josiah Royce; the committee on hypnotic phenomena, by Mr. Charles B. Cory; and the committee on mediumistic phenomena, by Dr. W. N. Bullard.

— The reports of M. Larrieu, late missionary in China, who maintains that the great wall of China has never existed (*La Grande Muraille de Chine*, Paris, 1887), has been widely spread by the American daily papers. He claims that the wall consisted merely of watch-towers, built of earth and bricks, about twenty-five feet high and a thousand feet apart. In a few places they were connected by an embankment. He also says that the wall north of Peking and the palisades west of Sian-tung never existed. These views cannot be correct, as numerous travellers have seen the wall or its ruins. In regard to the palisades of Sian-tung, H. E. M. James, who recently visited Manchuira, says that at the present day they have disappeared entirely, though a mound or row of trees occasionally marks the place where they stood. The gateways, however, he found still maintained as customs-posts, at which transit duties are levied. Undoubtedly the wall consisted in many parts of earth, but there is no reason to maintain that it never existed.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR.

*** Correspondents are requested to be as brief as possible. The writer's name is in all cases required as proof of good faith.*

Twenty copies of the number containing his communication will be furnished free to any correspondent on request.

The editor will be glad to publish any queries consonant with the character of the journal.

Rock Specimens from Cumberland Sound, Baffin Land.

THE following specimens were collected by Mr. W. Whiting of the whaling-station of Messrs. Williams & Co., New London, Conn., on Umanaktuak, an island on the south-west coast of Cumberland Sound. The specimen No. 10 was found by an Eskimo on a hunting excursion, and sold as a curiosity to Mr. Whiting, from whom I received the specimens for examination.

1. *Bowlder from the Bed of a Torrent Umanaktuak.* — Compact limestone, almost black, and somewhat argillaceous. It weathers dark gray, and shows on the surface slightly projecting, fine, parallel lines of stratification from one-quarter to one-half an inch apart. No trace of fossils can be detected, either by inspection or in microscopic sections. Under the microscope it is seen to consist of gray, rounded, fine calcareous grains with a few black ones, all apparently deposited from water.

2. *South-west Corner, Umanaktuak.* — Graphite with rusty surfaces, and holding drusy white quartz.

3. *Same Locality.* — A decomposing black crystalline rock, which, on microscopic examination, proves to consist of graphite, with hornblende, a triclinic felspar, and a little quartz. It breaks into angular fragments along thin layers of graphite, which are slickensided, and give each one the appearance of a piece of this mineral alone.

4. *Little Hill* (*Kaqodloaping*), *Umanaktuak.* — Hornblendic gneiss, of a rather coarse 'pepper-and-salt' appearance, consisting of about equal parts of quartz and felspar, forming the white portion, and of black hornblende with smaller quantities of brown mica, the dark.

5. *Big Hill, Umanaktuak, High Level.* — Light gray gneiss of medium texture, composed of about equal parts of orthoclase and quartz, with a subordinate proportion of fine scales of black mica. Occasional crystals of the felspar are much larger than the rest.

6. *Big Hill, Umanaktuak, Shore Line Eastward.* — Gray gneiss, consisting of layers of mixed orthoclase and quartz, alternating with others composed of scales of brown mica.

7. *Umanaktuak.* — Rusty mica-schist of medium texture, the quartz in small proportion.

8. *Vein in Umanaktuak.* — Translucent white vitreous quartz having exactly the appearance of alum.

9. *Umanaktuak.* — White rather coarsely crystalline felspar and quartz, with a few small scales of white mica, being a very light-colored variety of granite, apparently from a small vein.

10. *About 40 Miles Inland, in a South-Westerly Direction from Umanaktuak.* — Foliated graphite with rusty surfaces and partings.

11. *Umanaktuak.* — Vitreous translucent gray quartz with thin plates of brown mica traversing it in different directions.

These specimens indicate the ordinary Laurentian system, and are of much the same character as on the north side of Hudson Strait, where the rocks appear to be allied to those of the lower Ottawa valley, and to be somewhat nearer and more modified than the great mass of the Laurentian in the Hudson Bay territories.

Dr. ROBERT BELL,
Assistant Director Geological Survey of Canada.

Ottawa, Nov. 28,

'Eskimo and the Indian.'

I WISH to add my voice to emphasize Dr. Boas's criticism of the method employed in Mr. Chamberlain's article with the above title. Though I should be sorry to hurt Mr. Chamberlain's feelings, I am obliged to say that there has been a great deal too much of the same sort of work done, and erroneous comparisons of this kind seem particularly alluring to those who attempt the study of the comparative philology of American languages on a large scale.

One reason for these errors is not far to seek. They of course are obliged to work with the published vocabularies of the Eskimo language. Now, as they have no knowledge of this language (and the number of those who have even an elementary knowledge of it, outside of the Danish settlers in Greenland, might almost be counted on the fingers), they are entirely unable to realize how bad most of those vocabularies are phonetically. Even the best of these, Dr. Rink's lately published comparative list of stem-words (see Dr. Boas's article in *Science*, Dec. 2), is written in the modern Greenlandic alphabet, which, in my opinion, masks many important phonetic relations, and they seem to have a sort of fatal instinct for getting hold of the oldest and least phonetic vocabularies. This is specially evident in Mr. Chamberlain's list of words. Dr. Boas has sufficiently disposed of the first table, but to show how misleading such things are, I have taken the trouble to go through his second list, taking such words as can be recognized as Eskimo words at all, and showing how their resemblances to the Indian words are due to a misapprehension of the real sound of the words. In expressing the sounds phonetically, I have used the alphabet employed by the Bureau of Ethnology in writing Indian languages, as the one with which I am most familiar. I think it will be sufficiently intelligible.

1, *hrownik*, 'bone,' is the well-known Eskimo word *sauneq* (the initial *s* is perhaps merely an aspirate in some parts of the central region).

2, *anayva*, 'brother,' is a misprint or misquotation of *añayoa* of Father Petitot's Mackenzie vocabulary. This means 'his elder brother,' being the well-known *añayo* (Greenland spelling, *angajo*) with the so-called suffix.

3, *tchene-yoark*, 'do,' is phonetically *tceneyoaq*, the regular Mackenzie dialectic variant of *sanavoq*, 'he works.'

4, *anyark*, 'day' (Mackenzie), is a misprint for *anyaρk*, defined by Petitot as '*jour long*.'

5, *tschintak*, 'ear' (Tchuktschi = Asiatic Eskimo), is an evident error for *siuta*, 'his ear.' In this case the correction makes the comparison a little better, for the words compared at least begin with the same letter.

6, *atta*, 'father,' is the baby-word *atata*, *adada* (perhaps the same as 'daddy').

7, *aihanka*, 'fingers,' is probably a Reindeer Chukch or Siberian word.

8, *oonoktook*, 'to burn,' is a well-known compound of which the stem-word is *uvoq*.

9, *akseit*, 'foot' (hand), is properly *axcait* (Greenland spelling, *arssait*), which appears in the other dialects as *aggait*, *adrigai*, etc.

10, *ayunitork* 'good' (Mackenzie), is really a compound, *ayuñitsoq*, 'not bad' (Greenland spelling, *ajungitsok*).

11, *eshet*, 'hand' (Kadiak), is evidently *arssait* again.

12, *kakkairar*, 'lip' (Mackenzie), is meant for *kakkiviaρ* of Petitot's vocabulary, which is a well-known compound of *kakik*.

13, *anaha*, etc., 'mother,' is evidently another well-known baby-word, *anana*, sometimes *amama* (really, I think, *mama*).

14, *chinga*, 'nose' (Tchuktschi), is *qingâ*, 'his nose,' of all the dialects. (The initial sound is perhaps nearer to *k*, though a well-marked guttural.)

15, *annu*, *annju*, 'snow,' should probably be *anigo*.

16, *ukshiok*, *uktschuk*, 'winter,' is *ukioq* in at least five other dialects.

17, *aganak*, 'woman,' loses all resemblance to *ekening* in the forms in which it is usually seen, *axnaq*, *añna*.

Thus I have shown that out of twenty-five comparisons, at least seventeen depend on a total misapprehension of the pronunciation or meaning of the words for even the "fortuitous coincidences of sound" alluded to by Boas.

I must, however, do Mr. Chamberlain the justice to say that his remarks about the possibility of the Eskimo name for copper having been derived from the language of the Indians from whom they obtained the copper, are certainly suggestive. The Greenlandic word for copper is *kangnusak*, which is much more like *kanadzia* than the words used for comparison by Mr. Chamberlain, and this word is called a stem-word, *i.e.*, nothing is known of its etymology. Such a case is, however, of no value in arguing any relationship between the two languages.

JOHN MURDOCH.

Smithsonian Institution, Dec. 3.

The Eskimo Tribes.

I HAVE just read with great interest the notice by Dr. F. Boas (in *Science* of Dec. 2) of Dr. Rink's latest work. Dr. Boas has to a certain extent anticipated my own intentions, as I had already handed in to the publishing committee of the Washington Anthropological Society a somewhat lengthy review of the same work for publication in the first number of the new periodical which that society is about to publish. I have, however, discussed the subject in much greated detail than would be suitable for the columns of *Science*, and therefore venture to believe that my paper has not been rendered superfluous even by Dr. Boas's excellent article.

I am glad to find that Dr. Boas agrees, in the main, with the conclusions I had arrived at myself, though I have had the boldness to carry further than he has done the theory of the dispersion of the Eskimo race on this continent. In my discussion of Dr. Rink's arguments, there were so many points of interest that the question of Indian influence entirely escaped my attention, so that I am much pleased to see that Dr. Boas has presented this side of the question. A somewhat detailed study of the arts of the Western Eskimos leads me to agree entirely with his opinion.

I am strongly inclined to believe, though the evidence is not yet complete, that the use of the birch-bark canoe by some of the Eskimos on the Alaskan rivers, which Dr. Rink believes is an evidence of their primitive culture, is simply an adoption of the habits of their Indian neighbors, induced by the fact that where they live it is easier to obtain birch-bark than sealskins. Though it is by no means unlikely that, as Dr. Rink believes, the Eskimo skin-boat is descended, so to speak, from a birch canoe, I do not believe that the canoes just mentioned are in the same line of descent.

Dr. Boas's view of the condition of the Eskimos before their separation into their present divisions seems to me highly probable, though I think a little more study will enable us to add to it considerably.

I have already at hand nearly enough linguistic material to prepare a good-sized list of the animals that must have inhabited the original home of the Eskimos.

In conclusion, I most heartily concur in Dr. Boas's opinion that Dr. Rink's work will be highly appreciated by all ethnologists. It certainly deserves to be.

JOHN MURDOCH.

Smithsonian Institution, Dec. 3.

Queries.

19. WHO FIRST SAID IT? — The very interesting discovery announced by Professor Trowbridge, that birds have a power of sleeping on the wing, brings to mind that it is not a recent observation, but was anticipated by a very astute philosopher and poet, Edgar A. Poe. In a poem which he says was written in his youth, and published more than thirty years ago, are these lines: —

> "O is it thy will
> On the breezes to toss?
> Or capriciously still
> Like the lone albatross,
> Incumbent on night
> (As she on the air)."

To which he appends this marginal note: "The albatross is said to sleep on the wing." This poem, however, was criticised by another philosophic writer, 'John Phœnix,' who gave it as his opinion that the poet invented the fact in natural history because he found there were no words to rhyme with 'toss' but 'hoss' and 'albatross.' This is now happily discredited; but the question remains, Who first "said it"?

P. J. F.

Clinton, Io., Nov. 26.

Answers.

18. METEOR-FALL. — In reference to the query "Was the Amsterdam meteorite a hoax?" the following from the Amsterdam *Democrat* of Nov. 19 explains it in fewer words than perhaps I can: "A man came down from Fort Hunter this morning to see the 'aerolite.' A meteorologist from Troy arrived in town to-day, having come in haste without his dinner, and was much disappointed when told that the 'aerolite' was a hoax. It is also stated that a party are on their way hither from Philadelphia. A big stone did fall in the place indicated. The only trouble is, instead of falling from the sky, it fell from a wagon, which was loaded and broke down with it, that's all, but it rather spoils the sensation." Newspaper statements report that on Aug. 30 a meteorite had been seen by a number of people on Main Street between Howard and Milk Streets, Spokane Falls, Wash. Ter. It was said to have struck the electric wires, cutting one of them in two. It was described to be a ball of fire ten feet in diameter. This proved to be nothing but the crossing of the electric light wires, which resulted in the melting of one of them. On the evening of Nov. 7 a large meteor shot over St. John's University, St. Cloud, Minn., and decended within two miles of the University. A vigorous search was made by professors and students, but no trace of the meteorite was found. It was concluded by all that it had fallen in the lake, in the direction of which the meteor had passed. The many sensational accounts of meteoric falls at Wellsburg, N.Y., Evansville, Ind., the Georgia metal ball, etc., are all the productions of a so-called reporter's fertile brain.

GEORGE F. KUNZ.

New York, Dec. 5.