

Five chapters were admitted to membership. The first day of the convention was devoted to committee-meetings, addresses, and reading of papers. In the evening a reception and banquet was tendered to the delegates by Chapter 700, at the home of Miss Crane. The second morning was given to the president's address, competition for diplomas, reading of papers on modes of work, and exhibition of specimens. In the afternoon the assembly visited the Iowa State Hospital for the Insane, and were shown through the institution by Dr. F. P. Peck, who in the evening delivered before the assembly a very interesting and profitable lecture entitled 'Notes on the Anatomy of the Brain.' The usual convention picture was taken during the afternoon. The third and last day of the convention was devoted, in the morning, to the reading of papers, debate, and miscellaneous business; in the afternoon, to awarding the diplomas, general business, and election of officers. Diplomas awarded for the best records of work done during 1887-88 were as follows: first, to Chapter 653, of Oskaloosa; second, to Chapter 20, Fairfield; third, to Chapter 812, Davenport. Officers elected were: John G. Speilman, Chapter 20, Fairfield, president; Fred B. Palmer, Chapter 653, Oskaloosa, vice-president; Fred M. Irish, Chapter 285, Dubuque, 2d vice-president; Miss Olive Cole, Chapter 700, Mount Pleasant, secretary; Belmont A. Goam, Mount Pleasant, continuing in office as treasurer. Oskaloosa was chosen as the place of the next convention. Enough praise cannot be given to the members of the entertaining chapter, A.A. 700, for their hospitality and good management, which has made the fifth annual convention of the Iowa Assembly of the Agassiz Association a meeting which will never be forgotten.

—The Congress of Americanists, devoted to researches into the pre-Columbian history of this continent and into the languages and character of its aboriginal tribes, met in Berlin on the 2d instant. We may be able to give some account of the proceedings in a future number. The next meeting will be held in Paris in 1889. It is hoped that arrangements may be made for a meeting of this learned body in the United States. An error occurred in the telegraphic announcement of the opening, last week, which mentioned "Horatio Hale of Clinton, Ontario," as among the members present. Mr. Hale was not able to be present, but sent a communication to be read by another member. The appearance of his name in the printed list of contributors doubtless led to the error.

—One of the annoyances connected with the use of instruments containing lenses, in the examination of the cavities of the body, is due to the fact that they become dim by the deposition of moisture. Dr. Stocquart claims that this can be prevented by spreading a drop of glycerine on the lens.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR.

A Notable Evolution.

YOUR number of Sept. 7 coming to hand yesterday, I find in it a letter under the above title, from Mr. E. P. Powell, that seems likely to mislead those not informed on the subject. After the statement that "every one knows what a clumsy singer" the robin is, it goes on to describe the peculiar musical powers now noted in some few individuals. The mere fact of such great rapidity occurring in the robin's musical evolution would of itself cause suspicion that the former state had not been well observed. Now, the fact is, that the robin is not, and for several years has not been, a clumsy singer, when it wishes to exert itself. That it is not as constant a songster as the majority of song-birds may be accounted for by its lazy habits, remarked by Mr. Powell. It is quite true that its more common notes are quite unmusical in character, but in noting any song-evolution it will not do to overlook its other, not infrequent song. It is now some fourteen years since I first began to collect birds and study them in a practical manner. I am positive that at the beginning of that time the robin was no mean songster. From five to seven o'clock in a summer or early fall evening it is an almost daily occurrence for them to take their stand on the topmost bough of some tall tree, and for an hour or more pour forth a flood of melody. This song isn't a repetition of a "rough seesaw note," but a variety of very liquid notes rendered in a most musical manner. Nor is this song confined alone to the evenings, but

may often be heard during the day. Such, at least, were the robins of Rochester, N.Y., and many other localities with which I was familiar for the past fourteen years. Whether any change has taken place there within the past year, I cannot say, for I have not been within hearing distance of a robin for that time.

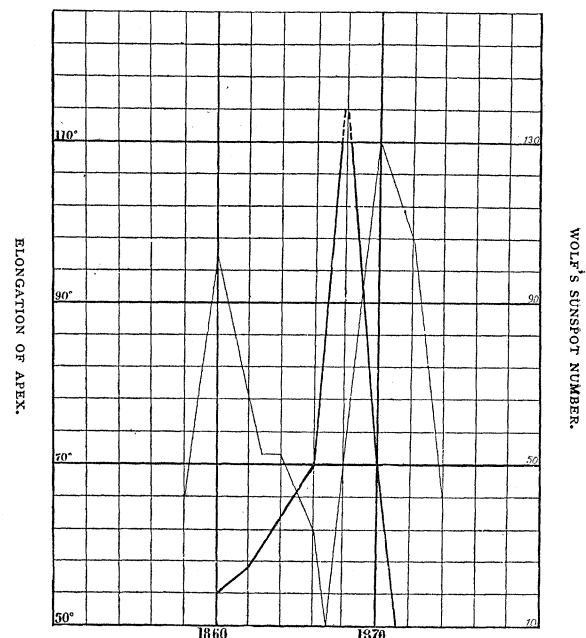
Mr. Powell's stricture on Professor Baird's remark about the catbird strikes me as a trifle unfair. It can't be supposed that Professor Baird was unacquainted with the mimicking-powers of this bird. The merest tyro in ornithology, who lives anywhere in their vicinity, must be acquainted with this. What Professor Baird stated was perfectly true as far as it went; for their 'mewing' is *the* characteristic note: hence the name 'catbird.'

HENRY L. WARD.

Tacubaya, D.F., Mex., Sept. 20.

The Zodiacal Light.

A DISCUSSION of the long series of observations on the zodiacal light by Heiss and Weber (1843-83), and also a ten-year series by Backhouse, having shown a clear connection between the extent of the zodiacal light and the condition of the solar surface, as is shown in the following curves drawn from observations made by Backhouse, in which the heavy line indicates the mean yearly elongation



of the zodiacal light, and the light line the course of Wolf's relative sunspot numbers, I am, for the sake of other connections foreshadowed, anxious to obtain as many observations of the zodiacal light as possible. The material is, however, badly scattered, and compels me to ask through your columns that any who know the whereabouts of such observations would kindly call them to my attention.

O. T. SHERMAN.

Baltimore, Md., Sept. 29.

Periodicity of Thunder-Storms.

THE researches of Von Bezold in regard to a periodicity of thunder-storms corresponding to the time of the rotation of the sun, referred to in *Science* for Oct. 5, on p. 167, corroborate the results secured by the writer. In certain years this periodicity becomes more evident. In 1886 for months together it was very plainly apparent upon the most cursory examination. In other years more complete information from wider areas has been necessary in order to bring it out clearly. It seems to me strange that any one should ignore facts because their full significance may not be clearly understood at present. The note which you publish in regard to Von Bezold shows that he was inclined to do this, and this tendency appears to be specially difficult to overcome in the investigation of this subject.

M. A. VEEDER.

Lyons, N. Y., Sept. 8.