

SCIENCE:

A WEEKLY NEWSPAPER OF ALL THE ARTS AND SCIENCES.

PUBLISHED BY

N. D. C. HODGES,

874 BROADWAY, NEW YORK.

SUBSCRIPTIONS.—United States and Canada.....\$3.50 a year.

Great Britain and Europe..... 4.50 a year.

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CURRENT NOTES ON ANTHROPOLOGY. — VIII.

[Edited by D. G. Brinton, M.D., LL.D.]

The Palæo-Ethnology of Mahgreb.

UNDER the name Mahgreb (*Beled el Mahgreb*, Land of the West) the Arabs distinguish that portion of Africa west of the Nile Valley, and north of the southern boundary of the Sahara, from the Soudan (*Beled es Sudan*, Land of the Blacks). It is a convenient geographic term, and as we have adopted Soudan we may as well also take Mahgreb, especially as it is a well-marked ethnic area. It is and has been from time immemorial the home of the Berber, or Hamitic, or Proto-Semitic peoples, as they have variously been termed.

In a late number (April 9) of the *Revue Scientifique*, A. Chatelier gives an admirable summary of the prehistory of this region. Signs of Palæolithic man abound in all parts, carrying his residence far back into the quaternary, when quite different geographic distributions of water and climate prevailed from the present. He was succeeded, apparently without a hiatus, by neolithic communities, who developed the art of stone-implement making to great perfection. Their numerous workshops and village sites occur on the watered lowlands, showing that the physical geography of the country had then reached its present state. The neolithic industry continued to nearly the Christian era, flint chips being found in tumuli overlying Roman remains. There are also many rock-drawings belonging to this period, rude, but revealing Egyptian inspiration in the costumes depicted, the human figures with ibis heads, etc.

But the most striking features of the prehistoric remains are the megalithic structures, the dolmens, menhirs, cromlechs, triliths, stone circles, etc, which are abundantly scattered over the soil from Fez in Morocco to the Tripolitan plateaux, where they abruptly cease, none extending into Egypt. These were undoubtedly constructed by the ancestors of the present Berber population. They not only claim them as the tombs of their forefathers, but to this day some

of the tribes surround their cemeteries with similar stone circles, called *Heuch*. That they were in common use at a late date is proved by the discovery in some dolmens of iron and Roman coins; and that these relics were of contemporary date and not intrusive, is proved by the presence of several structures of this character in southern Tunisia, built on an old Roman road.

That precisely similar megalithic remains are found in Palestine, is explained by the presence there of the Amorites and other true Hamitic tribes; that they can be traced in a continuous line across the Straits of Gibraltar, through northern Spain and France to England and Denmark, and not beyond, offers a suggestive hint concerning the prehistoric migrations of the Mediterranean peoples.

The conclusion which M. Le Chatelier especially impresses on his reader is, that the same Berber stock has possessed Mahgreb, so far as all evidence goes, from the very earliest times of which we have any cognizance down to the present day.

The Prehistoric Culture and Commerce of the Mediterranean.

Archæological research is rapidly dispelling the erroneous notions that the early civilizations of the Mediterranean were derived from Asia or Egypt; and that previous to the mythical advent of Cadmus, or the founding of Carthage and Rome, the coasts of this great sea were peopled by savages. In fact, one of the most brilliant periods of commerce and culture on the Mediterranean was about 1500 B. C. At that date there were several centres on the European shore of high civilization, wholly independent and occidental in their ideals and technique; on the southern shore the Hamitic Libyans and Mauritanians had, by spontaneous development, reached a degree of culture quite up to that of their neighbors, the Egyptians. It is chiefly by the accident that their art-products have been better preserved, that we have hitherto attributed a superior grade of advancement to the latter. There is no reason for believing that the Egyptians were much in advance of the other nations of the Mediterranean basin at the close of the Old Empire. The introduction of metals was what chiefly led to the predominant influence of oriental ideas. This event occurred between 1500 and 1200 B. C.

These opinions, which are now gaining general credence, are well set forth in a volume published lately in London, by Professor W. M. Conway, entitled "The Dawn of Art in the Ancient World." It would be easy to support his views by abundant evidence.

On Ethnic Nosology.

Differences in races are not confined to matters of anatomy and physiology, but show themselves to a marked degree in special liability to, or immunity from, certain classes of diseased conditions. This has attracted the attention of the medical profession from time to time, but only recently, since the discriminating traits of races have been more closely studied, has it received proper attention. In this country the practitioner who has treated of it most extensively is Dr. Albert S. Ashmead, of New York City. His articles on racial immunity and inoculation, on the ethnic extension of syphilis, leprosy, tuberculosis, yellow and scarlet fevers, have appeared in various medical journals, and embody a mass of instructive observations on the relative presence of these complaints in different peoples.

The study of the causes of racial immunity from disease has a very practical side. When we find, for instance, that