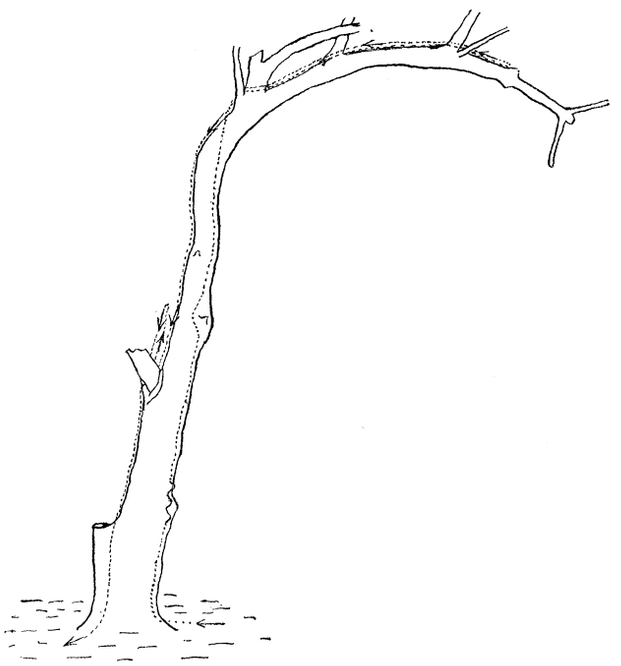
the base of the tree for a foot, it contented itself with basking in the sun.

While lying thus, it lifted up its head four or five inches and gaped. Its mouth opened very wide; but while closing, the nervous spasm, only half expended, again seized upon its jaws, whereupon they went wider than before; the spasm exhausting itself at last in a parting wriggle or two to the head.

So natural was this novel performance, that I involuntarily listened for that characteristic accompaniment, the little agonizing whine so common with the dog, and not uncommon with us.

After a sun-bath of nearly half an hour, the snake began slowly to descend. His course was as straight coming down as it had been going up; but, now being on the top of the trunk, he naturally kept to the outside of the bend. His progress was interrupted with frequent pauses, and at times it was so slow that I could scarcely detect any movement.

When it reached a fork of the tree, about ten feet from the ground, a titmouse came along. It soon discovered the snake and became much excited. Its scoldiing soon brought its mate, when each one, emboldened by the presence of the other, tried to see how much nearer it could go. They hopped all round the snake, now three feet and now scarcely so many inches from it. Had the snake been hunting birds, it would now have needed but



little dexterity to catch one. But the snake paid no attention to them; and after fluttering foolishly near for a time, they paid no further attention to it, flew off, and did not return.

When within about five feet of the ground, the snake paused beside the dead stub of a limb. Swinging its head round toward the stub, it held it there as if intently regarding something it had found. Suddenly its head began slowly to disappear in a hole which I had not noticed. When its head was out of sight, I stepped quite near. It kept gradually forcing its way into the snag until six or eight inches of it had disappeared. All the while it was going in, its body was shrinking and swelling as if it were panting. Evidently it was cautiously smelling its way into what afterwards proved to be a mouse-nest. Possibly it had feasted before on tender, juicy, young mice, and was now promising itself a repetition of such luxuries. When one reflects that stumps, logs, fence-rows, rail-piles, and the like are at the same time the haunts of snakes and the nesting-places of ground-mice and squirrels, he cannot but conjecture how often the helpless young of the latter must fall a prey to snakes. Also, it may be questioned whether the economic value of snakes is not underestimated.

Not finding his game in this instance, however, his highness stiffened himself and withdrew. But, as if loath to give up the treat he had promised himself, he lingered quite a while at the spot, and busied himself in a way which probably accounted for his moving so slowly before, but which from my distance had been unnoticed. He seemed to be using his tongue as a tactile organ on the bark, playing it back and forth from his mouth like a little brush, running it way out, or dropping it down close to his chin, according to the nearness of the piece of bark under inspection. It finally turned up the tree again, carefully sampling the bark as it went. It seemed in quest of something, but what could it find with its tongue? when so evidently, to the eye, there was nothing for a snake to eat. After going but a little ways, he again turned down. But all the way, from here down, it kept up that use of its tongue on the bark. When it reached the ground, it glided off as slowly as before. I now stood by quietly, but did not conceal myself.

The snake had seemed to me to be about two-thirds grown. His not recognizing me as an enemy also showed that he was a young snake, and had not yet learned to be wary of his neighbor's Christian heel. It continued to pause now and then as before, and, as before, I could see its thread-like tongue playing back and forth, licking the way along. But, what was my surprise, at about ten feet from the tree it came down, to see it start up another, this time a jack-oak, about fifteen inches in diameter. The bark in this case was rougher and the climbing must have been easier, but it went up just as slowly as before, and, to the height of three feet at least, its course was just as straight. When so high, I was suddenly struck with the resemblance of the gray blotches of the snake to the gray blotches of bark by which it was surrounded. So much alike were they, that at no greater distance than fifteen feet it was difficult to distinguish certain portions of its body from the bark. To consider this a case of mimicry would strain credulity. The habit of tree-climbing in that case would be common with snakes, and could not go unobserved. That such a practice is commonly observed, certainly is not true. Yet this resemblance, accompanied as it was by such voluntary tree-climbing, if accidental, is, to say the least, remarkable. For certainly we have here a young snake, not more than two-thirds grown. Could this tree-climbing be the exceptional trick of a young snake? Not likely. Any such performance which a young snake takes to so naturally, it must have begun to learn farther back than its grandmother.

However this may be, however probable it is that snakes are decreed to go on their bellies on the ground, I shall, I suppose, hereafter be looking for snakes in trees; and, on meeting one, shall give him every encouragement to show forth a tree-climbing instinct.

I should say that at this juncture I lost the snake, and so was unable to identify him. A flock of cattle browsing in the wood came upon us. While watching to see how near these would come before noticing me, the snake slipped unobserved away.

CURRENT NOTES ON ANTHROPOLOGY.—XX.

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

Nervous Disease in Low Races and Stages of Culture.

AMONG the errors which have been diligently disseminated by physicians who lacked ethnological information is that which claims that diseases of the nervous system, especially those of a hysterical character, have greatly increased with the development of civilization, and are most common in the races of highest culture.

Both assertions are erroneous. Those intelligent travellers who give the soundest information on this subject report that in uncultivated nations violent and epidemic nervous seizures are very common. Castren descibes them among the Sibiric tribes. An unexpected blow on the outside of a tent will throw its occupants into spasms. The early Jesuit missionaries paint extraordinary pictures of epidemic nervous maladies among the Iroquois and Hurons. The Middle Ages witnessed scenes of this kind, impossible to-day.

In a late number of the *Journal de Medicine*, Paris, Dr. De la Tourette points out the frequency of true hysteria and hysteroid seizures in the Black race, among the Hottentots and the Caffirs of East Africa, and among the natives of Abyssinia and Mada-

gascar. They present frequent cases of classical hysterical attack and occasional epidemics of choreo-mania, affecting both sexes. A negress of the Soudan was lately a patient in the celebrated clinic of Dr. Charcot, in Paris, and displayed the symptoms characteristic of neurosis. Civilization, so far from increasing this class of maladies, is one of the most efficient agents in reducing them in number and severity. When it is freed from certain elements not essential to it, especially religious excitement and competitive anxieties, it acts decidedly as a preventive.

Recent Contributions to American Linguistics.

The limited number of students who interest themselves in the native American languages will welcome the appearance of another of Mr. J. C. Pilling's most excellent bibliographies, this time the "Bibliography of the Athapascan Languages," a work of 125 large octavo double-columned pages, every page testifying to his unbounded industry and model accuracy. I lately showed one of his bibliographies to a distinguished professor of classical archæology, who assured me that in his own much more widely cultivated field there is no bibliographical work done equal to this of Mr. Pilling's.

The Count de Charencey, now probably the most accomplished Maya scholar in Europe, has published at Alençon a Maya translation by Father Ruz of Ripalda's "Catechismo y Doctrina." This was well worth doing, but students of the language should be warned that Father Ruz wrote a Maya of his own manufacture, having "improved" the language so much that the natives scarcely recognized it.

A most valuable addition to Mexican linguistics is a "Ligero Estudio sobre la Lengua Mazateca," by the Licentiate Francisco Belmar, published at Oaxaca this year. The only previous publication on this language was a short paper of my own in the Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society.

M. Raoul de la Grasserie, favorably known from previous careful studies in American linguistics, has issued an "Essai d'une Grammaire et d'un Vocabulaire de la Langue Baniva," one of the Arawack dialects of South America.

Through the kindness of Mr. Wilberforce Eames, librarian of the Lenox Library, I have been enabled to print in the Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society an abstract of a grammar of the Rio Napo dialects, drawn from a manuscript of the last century now in that collection. These dialects belong to the Betoya stock, of which we have had almost no grammatic material.

The already rich literature of the Tupi has received a valuable addition by the reprinting of Father Paulo Restivo's "Arte de la Lengua Guarani," at Stuttgart, under the competent care of Dr. Christian Frederic Seybold. It is particularly valuable for the very full list of particles, with their use and meaning. Dr. Seybold hopes in the future to bring out new editions of the exceedingly rare "Explicacion de el Catecismo en Lengua Guarani," of Nicolas Yapaguay, and the "Katecismo Indico da Lingua Kariris," of Father Bernard de Nantes.

Polynesian Ethnology.

The Polynesian Society, whose headquarters are at Wellington, New Zealand, commenced this year the publication of a quarterly journal devoted to the ethnology, philology, history, and antiquities of Polynesia. The first two numbers contain a collection of generally excellent articles, several of which are printed in the dialects of the islands, with translations. One of some length on the races and prehistoric occupation of the Philippines is a collation from a number of printed sources, not adding new material to our knowledge of the subject. An article on the inscriptions of Easter Island, by Dr. A. Carroll, designed to present translations of the inscribed slabs, is singularly unscientific and out of place. What is worse, he announces other translations in prospect, which he professes to read through the medium of ten different American languages! This is enough, or should be enough, to secure the non-publication of his paper by any learned society.

A number of lists of ancestors, native genealogies, are given. In some instances these extend for a hundred generations, the children being carefully taught to repeat them accurately. The length of a generation is estimated at about twenty years, so a maximum of two thousand years would be covered by these records.

The Aryan Question.

This question, which, like Banquo's ghost, "will not down," came prominently forward at the last meeting of the German Anthropological Society, held during the first week of August in Ulm.

Dr. Von Luschan took the opportunity to make an onslaught on Professor Penka's well-known hypothesis that Scandinavia was the original home of the European race. The trouble is, that at a time when we know a large part of Europe was well peopled, Scandinavia was covered with a vast glacier; and no evidence that its soil was occupied during the "Old Stone Age" has yet been adduced. This should be enough to suppress Penka.

The distinguished craniologist, Professor Kollmann of Basel, declared on the strength of skull-forms that there must have lived in Europe in neolithic times at least three, if not four, "autochthonous" races, which gradually intermingled and, by this blending of powers, gave rise to that superior intelligence which laid the foundation of European culture and assured the predominance of the white race of that continent in the later history of the world. Certain it is that neither he nor any other craniologist has been able to define either any European or any Aryan "type" of skull; and if the general theory of the cranial type is to be saved at all, it must be by some such *ex post facto* hypothesis as this.

The next meeting of the society will be held next August in Hannover.

Ethnology of the Eskimos.

A clear and pleasant account of the Eskimos appears in recent numbers of *Das Ausland*, from the pen of Fridhjof Nansen, the celebrated explorer of Greenland.

From their close similarity wherever found, and from the slight differences in their dialects, he believes them to have developed from some small and homogeneous stem in comparatively recent times and to have spread along the coasts of the icy sea. He expresses some doubt as to whether they occupied the southern extremity of Greenland when it was first discovered by the Northmen. The point from which they spread he believes to have been somewhere on the shores of Behring Sea or Behring Straits. In this he differs from Dr. Rink, who places their earliest assignable abode in the interior of Alaska, and still further from Mr. Murdoch, who, with greater probability, would locate it about Hudson Bay.

Nansen's description of the appearance, habits, and arts of the East Coast Eskimos is both amusing and instructive. He found them, in spite of many nasty habits, attractive in character and of good mental ability — all the better, the less they had been subjected to the influence of European instruction and religion. One of their curious superstitions is that they will not touch their hair, in the care of which they take great pride, with any object made of iron, not even to trim it. This recalls similar objections to that metal in the rites of ancient Rome and Egypt. Physically he describes them as a well-made race, quite of the average European height, the young women sometimes good-looking. The general tone of his article is highly favorable to the stock.

NOTES AND NEWS.

A MEETING was held recently at the State Capitol, Concord, N.H., upon the call of the Forestry Commission, to see what action is desirable toward the preservation of the forests among the mountains, and at the head-waters of the principal rivers. The Appalachian Mountain Club was represented by delegates, prominent citizens of New Hampshire were present, and much interest was manifested. The meeting formulated certain propositions indicating desirable laws to be secured from the incoming Legislature. It is apparent, however, that public discussion is necessary to find out what action is desirable and favorable, and to