

CURRENT NOTES ON ANTHROPOLOGY (VIII.).

A SPELÆOLOGICAL SOCIETY.

OF course, everybody knows what spelæology means—or perhaps there are one or two who do not, considering that the word was manufactured only last year. Its sponsor was M. E. A. Martel, a French scientist distinguished for his numerous and skillful explorations of caves for scientific purposes. In Greek *Speleus* means a cave, and 'spelæology' is the science of cave-hunting, as it was called by the English. A society has been formed in Paris with that as a specialty, concerning which the curious inquirer can learn more if he addresses M. Martel, No. 8. Rue Menard.

The subject is one richly deserving this kind of concentrated and special study. No localities preserve more perfectly the records of the past than caverns. In their darkness and silence, guarded by their massive walls, layer after layer of deposits have been strown by their occasional visitors, by inundations and by percolation. A stalagmitic floor, clean, hard and imperishable, seals the traces of every occupant in perfect preservation through all time. Some of the most important discoveries in geology and archæology are due to these conditions. I need but mention the labors of Lartet, Christy, Boyd Dawkins, and in this country of Cope and Mercer, to attest this.

But nowhere is ignorant excavation more fatal than in cave-deposits. There is a high science in their examination; and M. Martel has planned an admirable scheme to disseminate valuable instruction on this essential point.

A VALUABLE STUDY IN PRIMITIVE ART.

A STUDY in primitive art of the most satisfactory character has been lately published by the Royal Irish Academy. It is entitled 'The Decorative Art of British New Guinea: A Study in Papuan Ethnography,' by Alfred C. Haddon, M. A., Professor of Zoölogy in

the Royal College of Science, Dublin. The author approaches his topic with an extensive personal knowledge of it, and a thorough appreciation of its bearings on the leading questions of ethnology in general. The memoir is in large quarto, with twelve full-page plates and many cuts inserted in the text. Some of the designs are colored, and all are copied with fidelity and clearness. Their variety is astonishing, considering that we are dealing with the art of cannibalistic savages, and the sense of proportion and harmony often manifested is just and real. The rapid development of conventionalism is evident, and even in such primitive examples one soon loses the traits of the original design. This has often been commented on in American aboriginal art.

Professor Haddon corrects the impression which sometimes prevails, that art decoration, for itself, is unknown to savages. Art is related to ease; as he says, 'Art flourishes where food is abundant.' Another vital conclusion he expresses in these words: "The same processes operate on the art of decoration, whatever the subject, wherever the country, whenever the age, illustrating the essential solidarity of mankind." No truer words have been spoken on the subject, and ethnographers should learn them by heart.

In every respect the memoir is most creditable to the writer and to the institution which publishes it.

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JAMES EDWARD OLIVER.

ON March 27th, 1895, after an illness of ten weeks, died Professor J. E. Oliver, of Cornell University, universally honored and beloved.

For more than twenty years he has been at the head of the department of mathematics in this great institution.

Born in Maine in 1829, even from his graduation in 1849 he ranked as a mathematical genius, one of the most remarkable America has produced. But he seemed to have no ambition to leave an adequate record of his mental life in print. In personal character he resembled Lobachévsky, whom he intensely admired.

He was spontaneously loyal to the good and the true, enthusiastic, thorough, painstaking. He loved poetry; he loved Shakespeare; he was averse to religious creeds. For Professor Oliver goodness was spontaneous. He did the right not because it was right, but because he intensely wished to do just that. The spring of action seemed a combination of sympathy, perception, knowledge, scientific logic.

In mathematics Professor Oliver worked for the love of it and because he was deeply convinced that mathematics affords that fine culture which the best minds seek for its own sake.

He was a pronounced believer in the non-Euclidean geometry.

I vividly recall how he came up after my lecture on Saccheri at Chicago, and expressing his interest in the most charming fashion, proceeded unhesitatingly to give me a profound lecture on stellar parallax, the measurement of the angles of astronomical triangles and the tests of the quality of what Cayley called 'the physical space of our experience.'

Again, after the Brooklyn meeting of the American Association, he took up the same subject with me, explained a plan for combining stellar spectroscopy with ordinary parallax determinations, and expressed his disbelief that C. S. Pierce had proved our space to be of Lobachévsky's kind, and his conviction that our universal space is really finite, therein agreeing with Sir Robert Ball.

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JAMES DWIGHT DANA.

WE take from the authorized account by Professor Edward S. Dana, in the May number of the *American Journal of Science*, the following facts concerning Dana's life. He was born in Utica, N. Y., on February 12, 1813, his father and mother being from Massachusetts. He early showed an interest in natural history, which increased during his course at Yale College from 1830 to 1833. Immediately after graduation, Dana spent fifteen months as instructor in mathematics to the mid-shipmen of the United States Navy, the time being passed in the Mediterranean. He then spent two years at New Haven, being part of the time assistant in chemistry to Benjamin Silliman. The four following years were spent with the exploring expedition sent by the government of the United States under Wilkes to the Southern and Pacific Oceans. The following years were devoted to the study of the material collected. In 1844 he married a daughter of Prof. Silliman, who survives him, and in 1846 became associated with him in the editorship of the *American Journal of Science*. In 1850 Dana was made professor in Yale College. The remainder of his life was spent as teacher, editor, author and investigator.

Dana was President of the American Association for the Advancement of Science in 1852, and was one of the original members of the National Academy of Sciences; he received the Wollaston Medal of the Geological Society of London, the Copley Medal from the Royal Society, and the Walker Prize from the Boston Society of Natural History. He received honorary degrees from the University of Munich, Edinburgh and Harvard. He was a member of the Royal Society of London, the Institute of France, the Royal Academies of Berlin, Vienna and St. Petersburg, and many other societies.

In addition to a large number of papers