of the river Nile. He believes that he is able approximately to trace their early wanderings and to some extent their admixtures, by a comparison of skull forms. At this time, when there is so little unanimity among craniologists as to the value of their science in ethnography, it seems rather daring to select it as the corner stone of any hypothesis of ancient relationship; and it may be regarded as very doubtful whether Prof. Sergi will find many to accept his conclusions.

PREHISTORIC TREPHINING IN RUSSIA.

AN article by General von Krahmer in the *Globus*, Bd. LXVII., No. 11, describes an amulet obtained in 1883 from a neolithic burial in Russia. It was of bone, and on examination proved to have been taken from a human skull. Ten years later the archæologist Bieljachewski, in exploring a deposit on the banks of the Dnieper, exhumed a human skull from which just such a fragment must have been removed. Careful inspection showed that the trepanation had been performed after death, the spot selected being the right frontal bone. The instrument must have had a sharp cutting edge, but a lack of skill is manifested in the use of it. The skull belonged to a comparatively young person, probably a woman. From objects collected in its immediate vicinity, it may be assigned to the twelfth century.

Such examples are extremely rare in Russia. Among the crania at the anthropological museum in Moscow there is but one which shows ancient trepanation; but it is catalogued as from the Caucasus. However, the evidence brought forward by General von Krahmer, showing that this operation was occasionally practiced in order to obtain amulets from the parietes of the skull, is valuable as illustrating a primitive superstition which prevailed in several widely separated tribes.

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CURRENT NOTES ON PHYSIOGRAPHY (XIX.).

A LIMESTONE DESERT IN THE ALPS.

MUCH has been written about the barren and weathered limestone areas known as Lapiés, Lapiaz, or Karrenfelder, in the Alps. An interesting and well-illustrated account of the peculiar rock forms occurring on one of these areas, the 'Desert of of Platé,' in the Alps of Savoy, is lately presented by E. Chaix, of the Geneva cantonal school of horticulture (La topographie du desert de Platé, Le Globe, Genève, xxxiv, 1895, 67–108, excellent plates, map, 1:5,000). The desert occurs at an elevation of from 1,900 to 2,000 meters, an inextricable chaos of angular limestone ledges, a labyrinth of curiously sculptured rocks and deep worn crevasses. The surface chisellings are in the form of little troughs, varying in size in different strata, but always leading down the slope of the rock; these are ascribed to post-glacial wasting and washing. The crevasses, or open joints, are of older diastrophic origin but of modern weathering; they intersect successive strata, varying in width of opening as they pass from one bed to another, sometimes single and simple, sometimes very confused in their arrangement. A good review of previous writings on this subject is included in the essay.

MORAINIC AMPHITHEATER OF IVREA.

BESIDES the existing lakes enclosed by moraines at the Italian base of the Alps, there are certain extinct lakes—now alluvial plains—similarly enclosed; that of Ivrea, where the valley of the Dora Baltea opens from the mountains upon the great fluviatile plain, being the most remarkable. Agostini describes this great amphitheater in connection with its peat deposits (Le torbiere dell' Anfiteatro morenico d' Ivrea. Rev. geogr. ital., ii, 1895, 278–294, map). The best peat is found in the comparatively small basins that occur in the irregular

morainic wall; the small inwash of alluvium probably explaining the purity of these deposits. The great basin enclosed by the moraine is almost filled by the alluvium of the Dora Baltea, but at the extreme front of the amphitheater directly next to the inner slope of the moraine, and some distance on either side of the medial course of the river, two shallow lakes, Viverone and Candia, with marginal peat deposits, still remain. Other small basins, either lakes or peat bogs, occur on the alluvial plain and in shallow rock basins near the head of the amphitheater.

THE DEFORESTING OF MOUNTAINS.

A NATIONAL congress of French geographical societies was held last year at Lyons, and a report of its proceedings has been published by the geographical society of that city. To this volume Guénot, of Toulouse, contributed an essay on the effects of the deforesting of mountains, a subject to which he had previously given much attention. The Causses, plateau-like uplands in southern France, have for various reasons, historical and political, been gradually stripped of their forests, and as a result they are largely depopulated; twenty years has sufficed to transform a wooded district into a stony desert. In the Pyrenees the reports of the forestry officials show a constant relation between deforesting and various injurious effects, such as the stripping of soil from the slopes, the increased violence of floods in the mountain torrents and the decrease of population. In some valleys forest area and population have fallen to half their former numbers; in others the complete destruction of the forests has been followed by the complete abandonment of the district. Guénot urges a revision of the existing forestry laws in France, the extension of an organization known as the '*amis des arbres*,' and the introduction of tree-planting, as with us on Arbor Day. Confidence in the author is somewhat shaken by his exaggerated ideas about American matters; deforesting in this country is held responsible for severe droughts, for extreme heat and cold, and for heavy rains and floods; while our Arbor Day is described as a popular, national and religious fête, 'celebrated with the most astonishing solemnity.' W. M. DAVIS.

HARVARD UNIVERSITY.

SCIENTIFIC NOTES AND NEWS.

WINTER MEETINGS OF THE SCIENTIFIC SOCIETIES.

The American Society of Naturalists and the affiliated and related societies will meet at the University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, on the days immediately following Christmas, December 26th, 27th and 28th. The Society of Naturalists will meet on the afternoon of the 26th to organize and to hear the address of the President. The meetings promise to be of unusual scientific interest, and all possible arrangements have been made to contribute to the social entertainment of the members. The officers of several societies are as follows: *The American Society of Naturalists*—President, Prof. E. D. Cope, University of Pennsylvania; Secretary, Prof. H. C. Bumpus, Brown University. *The American Morphological Society*—President, Prof. E. B. Wilson, Columbia College; Secretary, Dr. G. H. Parker, Harvard University. *The American Physiological Society*—President, Prof. H. P. Bowditch, Harvard University; Secretary, Prof. S. F. Lee, Columbia College. *The Geological Society of America*, President—Prof. N. S. Shaler, Harvard University; Secretary, Prof. H. L. Fairchild, University of Rochester. *The Association of American Anatomists*—President, Dr. Thomas Dwight, Harvard University; Secretary, Dr. D. S. Lamb, Washington. *The American Psychological Association*—President, Prof. J. McKeen Cattell, Columbia College; Secretary,