

in which it came. In his nearly sixty years of continuous public service he achieved a distinction in his profession of which his corps may well be proud, and all who have enjoyed personal relations with him will hold him in loving remembrance. M.

ZOOLOGICAL NOTES.

THE GENERIC NAMES ICTIS, ARCTOGALE AND ARCTOGALIDIA.

IN my Synopsis of the Weasels of North America, published in *North American Fauna*, No. 11, June, 1896, I adopted the subgenus *Ictis* of Kaup, 1829, for the ordinary weasels. This name, however, is untenable for the weasels, being antedated by *Ictis* Schinz, 1824. Schinz, in his 'Naturgeschichte und Abbildungen der Sauge-thiere,' published at Zurich in 1824 (p. 110), gave the name *Ictis* to the Binturong (*Ictis albifrons*), which of course renders it subsequent use for a different group impossible.

The subgenus of weasels to which I applied the name *Ictis* Kaup takes the name *Arctogale* Kaup, 1829, with *Putorius erminea* as the type species. This use of *Arctogale* by Kaup, as stated in my Synopsis of the Weasels already referred to (p. 9), precludes its subsequent use by Peters and Gray (1864), and later authors for the Palm Civets, a genus of the family *Viverridae*, for which latter genus I propose the new name *Arctogalidia*, the type species as before being *A. trivirgata*.

C. HART MERRIAM.

CURRENT NOTES ON ANTHROPOLOGY.

WOMAN IN SOCIOLOGY.

THE *Revue de Sociologie* for 1896 (No. 7) has a detailed report of the 'Congrès féministe' held at Paris last summer, well worth reading by those interested in the sociological aspect of the 'woman question,' as presented by women themselves.

The crucial question of marriage was dis-

cussed amply, the general tendency being to discard it altogether in favor of free unions, which, it was argued, would generally be monogamic and lasting, in a ripened society.

The closely related question of prostitution was actively debated. Its legal regulation was condemned for many reasons, especially that men have no right to legislate as to what a woman shall do in that respect. The prevailing view was "that a woman should be absolutely free to sell herself or not, as she may choose," to quote the words of one of the (female) speakers.

Co-education proved a stumbling block, strange as that may seem to us. It was considered dangerous and likely to develop mannish women. All agreed that full civil and political rights should be given to women.

ANCIENT MAN IN ENGLAND.

THE President of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain, Mr. E. W. Brabrook, published an article in *The Archaeological Journal* for September last, touching upon the antiquity of the remains of man in Kent. It will be remembered that the stone relics from the chalk plateau of that region were closely studied by the late Sir Joseph Prestwich and others. They are very rude and geologically apparently very ancient, some claiming that they must be pre-glacial. Mr. Brabrook is of opinion that whenever it was that man first discovered the art of chipping stone, it certainly originated in Kent, 'and by all that we can judge from, as early in Kent as anywhere.'

This assertion is none too bold. It does not mean that from Kent this simple art spread over the world, but that in that locality we can trace a real beginning of human culture. Whether it can be followed in an uninterrupted development down to historic times, he considers more doubtful.

THE CHACO IDIOMS.

STUDENTS of American languages are laid under further obligations to Mr. Samuel A. Lafone Quevedo by his recent publications on the Mbaya dialect, and those of the Matacos and Mataguayos. They are published in the Boletín del Instituto Geográfico Argentino, Tom. XVII. The last mentioned is drawn from the vocabularies of the traveler d'Orbigny, and is prefaced with a valuable introduction. The Mbayas are the Guaycurus of the older writers.

The tribes of the Gran Chaco have remained in the utmost entanglement and doubt until the numerous and careful studies of Lafone Quevedo have enabled us to classify them with a close approach to correctness. Here, as elsewhere, when it becomes possible to compare in detail a number of tongues, we find that many of their dissimilarities disappear, and the supposed diverse stocks melt into related groups of dialects.

D. G. BRINTON.

UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA.

ASTRONOMICAL NOTES.

WE learn from the February number of *Popular Astronomy* that Dr. See and Mr. Cogshall have discovered a number of new southern double stars at the Lowell observatory in the city of Mexico. Five objects are enumerated. Strange to say, three of these objects are bright stars with very faint companions of about the 13th magnitude, all situated at pretty nearly the same distance and position angle with respect to the principal star. The *a priori* probability of such a triple discovery is so small that we suspect the possibility of the observer's having been misled by a 'ghost.' We shall look with interest for a confirmation of these discoveries, if there is any other large telescope far enough south to examine these objects with any hope of success. Possibly the new McLean telescope, soon to be

mounted at the Cape of Good Hope, will be able to show these double stars.

THE *Astronomische Nachrichten* of January 15th contains an article by Dr. F. Cohn, in which he gives a new explanation of the systematic errors of heliometer measures. It has been found by various astronomers that measures of small distances made with this instrument require positive corrections. Dr. Cohn now points out that these peculiarities can be explained if we assume that all distances, both large and small, require the same systematic correction. This idea leads to the simplest explanation of these puzzling systematic errors that we have yet seen.

IN the January 26th issue of the same journal Dr. Wilsing considers the question of the absorption of light in astronomical objectives, and shows that, if the size of objectives be continually increased, a point is soon reached where the absorption more than counterbalances the increase in the light-gathering power. If the size of the objective be increased beyond this point the quantity of light reaching the focal plane will diminish.

WE have received a Doctor's dissertation by W. Ebert, in which the author deals with the possible disruption of the Solar System by the passage through it of a star having very great velocity. He comes to the conclusion that such an event would probably not produce disturbances of any great importance, unless one of the planets should happen to lie very near the course of the passing star.

H. J.

SCIENTIFIC NOTES AND NEWS.

M. A. CHATIN has been elected President of the Paris Academy of Sciences in succession to M. A. Cornu. M. M. Cornu has been elected President of the Botanical Society of France.

M. FAYE, the eminent astronomer and meteorologist, who is now eighty-three years