

struction is called to the aid of simple excavation. After showing that corry lakes are true rock basins and that local deformation cannot account for them, Fugger advances the idea that they lie in funnel-shaped cavities that once led down to subterranean channels opened by solution, but now obstructed; even advocating this explanation in corries of crystalline rocks, and defending it by a rather elaborate physico-chemical argument.

Apart from the general difficulty of believing in the sufficiency of underground solution in resistant rocks, it seems impossible that erosion thus determined could exceed that effected by the active streams that descend the steep slope on the open sides of corries. As the problem is presented by the writers mentioned above and by various others, glacial erosion seems to be the most competent cause for corry lakes.

THE 14000 MALDIVE ISLANDS.

THE rarely visited Maldive archipelago is described in an interesting article by Rosset (Mitth. Geogr. Gesell. Vienna, XXXIX., 1896, 597-637). The islands are all of coral formation, seldom more than two meters above sea level, with much unhealthy swampy surface. They are seldom more than a few miles in diameter. More than a hundred islets may form the circumference of a single atoll, and sometimes the individual islets themselves have a ring-like, atoll form. The seaward submarine slopes are steep; the shores are attacked by heavy surf, and the natives believe that the land area is decreasing. The islands are separated by deep passages through which strong currents run one way or the other according to the monsoon season. Many channels breach the reefs and give access to quiet anchorages in the lagoons. The colors about an atoll vary from the purple waters off shore to the green, shallow water, the white coral strand, the olive

brown reef with dark green vegetation, and the bright green lagoon. A description of the people and their history follows.

W. M. DAVIS.

HARVARD UNIVERSITY.

CURRENT NOTES ON ANTHROPOLOGY.

ELEMENTS OF MELANESIAN ART.

AN article of prime value to students of early art and to anthropologists in general is that by Dr. K. Th. Preuss, in the *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie*, 1897, Heft III. and IV., on the artistic designs of the natives of Kaiser Wilhelms Land, New Guinea. The material he had at his command was a collection of over five thousand specimens now in the Museum of Ethnography, Berlin. He considers it practically complete, presenting the world of their art in line and figure. His article is illustrated with 199 figures in the text, yielding ample means for studying the leading motives of these savage artists. The analysis of their favorite forms is traced out with masterly precision, and as one follows the author in his unraveling the strange and intricate figures he copies, no doubt is left of the success of his undertaking.

In some introductory pages he refers to the bearing of such studies on the question of transmission or independent origin, and on the tendency of primitive man to copy from nature and to conventionalize his copies. Several popular impressions are corrected and sounder methods of comparison explained.

THE EXTENSION OF THE ARAWACK STOCK.

THIS stock of South American languages has peculiar interest, as it is that which spread over the West Indian Archipelago and the Bahamas at some remote date; and if any of the native languages of our Gulf States had South American affinities, they should be looked for in the Arawack and not

in the Carib dialects, as the latter never approached nearer than the south of Cuba.

In the *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie* 1897, Heft II., Dr. Paul Ehrenreich contributes new materials to the tongues spoken on Purus river by the Paumari, Ipurina, Araua and Yamamadi tribes, showing that these are branches of this widespread stock. He remarks: "From the islands of the Antilles far south to the sources of the Paraguay and Madeira rivers, one can now follow an almost unbroken line of Arawack dialects, in which, in spite of the great distance of more than thirty degrees of latitude, it is easy to show a complete grammatical identity."

This is another example of the general fact that the extension of accurate research is rapidly diminishing the number of South American linguistic stocks.

THE ALLEGED SUMMERIAN LANGUAGE.

THE Summerians, so-called, inhabited southern Babylonia about 5,000 years B. C. Their northern branch are known as 'Ak-kads.' Some say that they spoke a tongue allied to the Semitic stock, while other authorities have maintained that the sufficiently abundant remains of this very ancient idiom show marked analogies to the Ural-Altaic tongues. The latest advocate of this opinion is Dr. K. A. Hermann, of Dorpat, who, at the tenth Russian Archæological Congress, urged strongly that the Summerian had the same construction, vocal harmony and phonetics as the Finnish-Ugrian branch of the Ural-Altaic stock.

In his paper, as reported in the *Centralblatt für Anthropologie*, Dr. Hermann fails to note the objections urged by the eminent Ural-Altaic scholar, Dr. Hugo Winkler to the supposed similarities of Summerian to Ugro-Finnic tongues. These objections are so cogent that they must be held conclusive for the negative. The Summerian, if it was not Semitic, which is still possible, may

have been Dravidian, or even a very primitive Aryan idiom. Either of these is more likely than the Ural-Altaic hypothesis.

D. G. BRINTON.

UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA.

SCIENTIFIC NOTES AND NEWS.

THE WINTER MEETINGS OF THE SCIENTIFIC SOCIETIES.

THE societies meeting at Ithaca as we go to press represent perhaps the most important attempt to bring the sciences into fruitful relations now existing in America. The National Academy of Sciences and the American Association for the Advancement of Science are more important organizations. They have done more for science in the past, and it may be that they will do more in the future. The National Academy, however, at the present time does not exert a great influence. At a recent session there was only one person present in addition to about twenty members, and each of the papers presented was only of interest to two or three of the members. There was not a line regarding this session in the daily papers of the city in which the Academy met, and it was, perhaps, referred to nowhere except in this JOURNAL. The American Association has during the past ten years had at its annual meetings an average attendance of only about four hundred members with a tendency to decrease. These have by no means been exclusively the four hundred most competent men of science in America, and the total work of the Association has been disappointing. We may hope for much from the anniversary meeting at Boston next year, but it must be acknowledged that at present the Association is in a position to need help from scientific men rather than to give help to them.

The associations devoted to a single science meeting during the Christmas holidays—the Mathematical Society, the Geological Society, the Chemical Society and the affiliated societies concerned with the biological sciences convening at Ithaca—are doing their work with thoroughness and with fruitful results. We miss a physical society, but otherwise each of the leading sciences is represented by a well or-