

in whose maturity their ridges may have even crests, like those of the Alleghenies. So a statement in an earlier paragraph, 'The Adirondacks rose as an insular land area in the earliest Paleozoic sea,' may unfortunately confirm the prevailing error that the Adirondacks were lifted out of water in the earliest Paleozoic sea, in spite of the preceding clause to the effect that they were first elevated in Archean time. The conclusion that the Adirondacks sank as an insular land in the Paleozoic sea is not presented.

PLATEAUS, TABLELANDS AND BASINS.

AN article on the Topography of Mexico, by H. M. Wilson, with a hypsometric map (Bull. Amer. Geogr. Soc., XXIX., 1897, 249-260), presents an account of the desert plains of the interior, including the following statement: "According to common belief, Central Mexico consists of a vast plateau. In fact, it is a great basin or depression, ribbed with many irregularly disposed or disconnected mountain ranges, buttes and isolated ridges, which are separated by broad valleys and plains. Many of these plains are the beds of ancient lakes, like those of Salt lake or Humboldt valley in Utah and Nevada, and have no drainage outlet to the sea" (p. 252). The objection here implied to the use of the term, plateau' is not valid, if a comparatively even surface at a considerable elevation is all that is required to make a plateau; for Mexico has plenty of that sort of surface; nor is the discontinuity of the plains a sufficient reason for placing them outside of the class of plateaus, inasmuch as many accepted plateaus are discontinuous, either from the addition of volcanic cones, the survival of residual mountains, or the excavation of canyons and valleys. Tableland or table mountain is an inappropriate name for an elevated region with still higher borders, although fitting for

such great cliff-edged plateaus as those trenched by the Colorado canyon, or for such huge plateau remnants as Roraima and Kukenam, in Guiana. Mesa is limited to smaller examples of uplands with precipitous borders on one or all sides. Basin is already used too indefinitely; being applied to ocean basins, river basins and lake basins, as well as to these arid depressions, floored over with accumulating waste from their higher rims. Penck has lately introduced the German word *Wannen* to replace the indefinite *Becken*, for depressed areas with centripetal drainage. *Bolson* is a Spanish-American term quoted by Hill as locally applied to the intermont depressions of the Mexican region. The curious thing in all this is that English-speaking geographers have no simple name with which to designate this well characterized class of land forms.

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CURRENT NOTES ON ANTHROPOLOGY.

THE BLACK RACE.

A SUCCINCT exposition of the ethnography of the black race is given by Professor Hamy in *l'Anthropologie*, Vol. VIII., p. 257, sq.

It embraces one-tenth of the human species (about 150,000,000); and of this, one-tenth again (1,500,000) has existed outside of Africa, in Melanesia, etc., from a period when those numerous islands were part of the Asiatic continent.

In Africa, within five degrees north and south of the equator, is the territory of the dwarfs, probably once stretching nearly across the continent. North of this, on both sides of Lat. 15° north, and from the Nile to the Atlantic, are the groups of pure blacks, of average stature, nearly all agricultural, and with a knowledge of iron from a remote date. South of the dwarfs are the Bantu peoples, extending from ocean to ocean, with notable physical differences,

but united by identity of language. The Bushmen and Hottentots in the far south form a separate group, with individual characteristics. But the whole race is distinguished from others by the combination of a dark skin and crisped hair.

ETHNOGRAPHY OF TUNIS.

Few portions of northern Africa are as interesting for the historian and ethnographer as Tunisia. There Carthage was situated and extended her powerful sway far inland, and thither Homer leads Ulysses to find the lotos-eaters.

The most thorough student of its ethnography, both past and present, is Dr. L. Bertholon, of the city of Tunis. He has published a number of memoirs of marked value, notably a *résumé* of the anthropology of Tunisia (1896), and anthropological exploration of Khumidria and the island of Gerba, the latter being the scene of the Homeric lotophagi (*L'Anthropologie*, 1897).

In the *Revue Tunisienne* (October, 1897) he sums up the evidence to show the European origin of certain elements of the Berber population of north Africa, from the ancient race of Europe represented by the Cro Magnon type. In supporting this thesis he calls to his aid both the survivals of the type in the present population and the information contained in Egyptian inscriptions and classical writers.

THE CHULTUNES OF LABNA.

LABNA is one of the ruined cities of Yucatan, and a *chultun* is the Maya name for a peculiar kind of chamber, constructed ten or fifteen feet below the surface and communicating with it through a well-like opening. They are common elsewhere in Yucatan and were described by the traveler Stephens in his familiar books. Some of them have finely polished, stuccoed sides, while others are roughly finished. Those at Labna are described with care by Mr. Edward H. Thompson in the 'Memoirs of

Peabody Museum,' Vol. I., No. 3 (Cambridge, 1897).

By some they have been considered granaries, by others water reservoirs. Mr. Thompson found in many of them human bones, stone implements and pottery. Those remains he inclines to believe are not indicative of the original intention of the chambers, but were, for some obscure reason, placed in the reservoirs when their original purpose was abandoned.

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NOTES ON INORGANIC CHEMISTRY.

At the recent meeting of the American Chemical Society in Washington attention was called to the fact that much of the best work now being done on atomic weight determinations is by American chemists. In this work Professor Richards, of Harvard, stands in the front rank, and his latest work is of great importance. In the Proceedings of the American Academy he has published, in connection with Mr. A. S. Cushman, a revision of the atomic weight of nickel, and, in connection with Mr. G. P. Baxter, a revision of the atomic weight of cobalt. The atomic weights of these two metals are of unusual interest, because, according to most determinations, that of cobalt is greater than that of nickel, while from its position in the periodic system the reverse would seem to be demanded. The late Professor Krüss attributed the discrepancy to impurities in the metals used by previous experimenters, and isolated from them what he supposed to be a new metal, 'gnomium,' whose existence has never been confirmed. Professor Richards' results are of decided comparative value, inasmuch as the same compound—the bromid—was used of both metals, and the analyses were carried out by exactly the same process. The metals were most carefully purified, but little variation was found