pearance, just as conditions (probably identical in character) have determined the degeneration of other early nutritional arrangements, *i. e.*, the milk-teeth. We, therefore, fall back upon the view that the Metatheria and Eutheria are the divergent branches of a common ancestral stock, which was not only diphyodont but also placental."

H. F. O.

CURRENT NOTES ON ANTHROPOLOGY.

THE TSIMSHIAN INDIANS.

IN 1894 Count von der Schulenberg published in Germany a bulky quarto of nearly four hundred pages on the language of the Tsimshian Indians. Very few people, either in Germany or among ourselves, know where the tribe, of some 3,000 souls, dwells. Dr. G. A. Dorsey, therefore, did a good piece of work when he wrote for the *American Antiquarian* (October, 1897, and reprint) a few pages on their geographical location, and added a map to make it clear. He refers to their myths and names their villages, modern and ancient. He closes his useful article with the common and fateful forecast: "The fate of the Tsimshian, as with his brother elsewhere on this continent, is to disappear."

CAVE HUNTING IN YUCATAN.

UNDER this title Mr. Henry C. Mercer delivered a lecture before the Massachusetts Institute of Technology which has been reprinted from the *Technology Quarterly* of December, 1897. It is a brief description of the work he did in Yucatan as given at length in his volume, the 'Hill Caves of Yucatan.' The lecture is illustrated with half a dozen very well printed photographs, and sets forth clearly the results of his researches.

Mr. Mercer thinks it necessary, toward the close of his lecture, to defend the expedition from the charge of failure. No one could have advanced such a charge who was capable of understanding the value of the results he obtained. He is quite right in vindicating for them an important position in the ancient history of Mayan civilization; though it would probably be going too far to say that they exclude the possibility of finding the traces of 'fossil man' in Yucatan.

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NOTES ON INORGANIC CHEMISTRY.

OUR knowledge of the carbids has been decidedly increased by a new series of experiments by Moissan described in the *Comptes Rendus*. It has been known that it is impossible to obtain carbids of sodium, potassium or magnesium in the electric furnace. These are readily formed, however, by heating the metal in acetylene gas. Potassium, indeed, acts on acetylene at ordinary temperatures with the formation of C_2HK, a compound intermediate between potassium carbid and acetylene and which yields acetylene with water. The corresponding sodium compound C_2HNa when heated to nearly the softening point of Bohemian glass decomposes into acetylene, carbon and metallic sodium. Magnesium carbid, similarly formed, decomposes in the electric furnace into carbon and metallic magnesium. The explanation of the impossibility of forming these carbids in the electric furnace is that at so high a temperature the carbid is completely decomposed. Indeed, in the manufacture of calcium carbid, if the current is too strong (in one experiment 60 volts and 1,200 amperes), the calcium carbid formed is decomposed into graphite and metallic calcium, the latter distilling off. Thus the stability of the alkaline carbids is much less than that of the alkaline earthy carbids.

THE fifth edition of the little brochure 'Data concerning Platinum' has just been published by Baker & Co., of Newark, N. J.