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.

In addition to its very full and illustrated description of various forms of platinum apparatus, it has notes on the care and cleaning of platinum ware, and a series of valuable tables which include the current required to fuse platinum wire of different sizes, weight of platinum wire of different sizes and foil of different thicknesses from 0.00045 to 0.1 inch, length of platinum wire per troy ounce, and many others. It is a useful book for the laboratory. The same firm has issued a little booklet—'Platinum: sources of supply, identification and separation of the ore; facts of interest to prospectors and miners.' It is printed in the hope of stimulating a search for platinum in mineral localities and increasing the American supply. From it we take the following: "There are few, if any, of the gold-bearing beds of the world that have failed to yield platinum, and it is more than likely that large quantities of platinum ore have been thrown away with the black sand washings from gold placer deposits." In the list of localities where platinum has been found we note a perpetuation of the old error which includes North Carolina. This, which was based upon a supposed single specimen, was several years ago shown by Professor F. C. Venable, of the University of North Carolina, to be a mistake. In view of the increasing use of platinum, the discovery of further pay deposits of platinum in this country would be of great value.

J. L. H.

SCIENTIFIC NOTES AND NEWS.

DR. W. K. BROOKS, professor of zoology at the Johns Hopkins University, was presented with his portrait on the evening of March 25th, on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of his birth. The presentation was made at Professor Brooks' home at Brightside, by Professor W. H. Howell, in the presence of twenty-two of the subscribers. The painting by Mr. Thos. C. Corner is regarded as an excellent likeness. A reproduction will be sent to each of the subscribers, who are for the most part former students of Professor Brooks, and include many of the leading zoologists of the United States. The committee which had the matter in charge consisted of Professor H. H. Donaldson, of the University of Chicago, chairman; Professors W. H. Howell and E. A. Andrews, of the Johns Hopkins University; Professor E. B. Wilson, of Columbia University; Professor H. V. Wilson, of the University of North Carolina; Professor S. Watasé, of the University of Chicago, and Professor T. H. Morgan, of Bryn Mawr College.

DR. TARLETON H. BEAN, Director of the New York Aquarium, has been asked to resign his office by the President of the Park Board. The conduct of the Aquarium under Dr. Bean has met with universal approval, and no reason is assigned for requesting his resignation. There is, in fact, probably none except the wish to secure an office with a salary of $4,000 for an adherent of Tammany Hall.

MAYOR VAN WYCK, of New York, has refused to sanction an appropriation for preparing the site in Bryant Park for the New York Public Library, and there is reason to fear that the new building may be long delayed.

REFERENCE was made in this JOURNAL some eighteen months ago to a subscription to defray the cost of a portrait of Mr. Herbert Spencer to commemorate the completion of his 'Synthetic Philosophy.' The portrait has now been completed by Professor Herbert Herkomer and will be sent to the Royal Academy this year. During Mr. Spencer's life-time it will hang in the Tate Gallery; afterwards, with the approval of the trustees, it will find its permanent home in the National Portrait Gallery.

IT is planned to secure a portrait of Lord Kelvin for the rooms of the Royal Society. Lord Kelvin was, it will be remembered, President of the Society from 1890 to 1895.

WE called attention, in the last issue of SCIENCE, to the memorial in memory of Buys Ballot, the eminent meteorologist. It may be added that Professor Willis L. Moore, Chief of the Weather Bureau, Washington; Dr. A. Lawrence Rotch, of Blue Hill Observatory,