Professor Cyrus Thomas has a critical review of Goodman's book on the 'Maya Inscriptions.' The reviewer points out the incorrect and unscientific character of most of the alleged discoveries, while recognizing that Mr. Goodman has shown for the first time that the periods are indicated on the monuments by symbols instead of by position, as in the codices, and has identified some of these symbols.

THE SCIENCE OF RELIGION.

The first number has appeared of the *Archiv für Religionswissenschaft*, edited by Dr. Thomas Achelis, and published by J. C. B. Mohr, Leipzig (14 Marks). It is a well-printed octavo of 112 pages, containing original articles by Hardy, Roscher, Seler and others, and reviews of recent works. The editor is well and favorably known for his works on ethnology and special studies in comparative religion. The spirit in which the *Archiv* will be conducted is that of broad inductive research and modern philosophical investigation. The problem which will constantly be presented in connection with religious history will be psychological, that is, the critical analysis of religious development as exhibiting the general religious consciousness of the species.

The article by Dr. Seler is on an American subject—the derivation of certain elements in the myths of Central America. That by Roscher is on the significance of Pan in Greek mythology.

It is to be hoped that the *Archiv* will receive adequate support.

D. G. Brinton.
University of Pennsylvania.

NOTES ON INORGANIC CHEMISTRY.

In a recent number of the *Comptes Rendus* A. Leduc has a paper on the composition of air at different places. His figures for the densities of different gases compared with oxygen agree very closely with those of Lord Rayleigh, but compared with air there is a constant difference, which amounts to about 0.0001. From this he draws the conclusion that the air of Paris contains 0.1 per cent. more oxygen than that of London.

The determination of the density of a gas has until recently been considered a difficult operation, requiring not only rather elaborate apparatus but a considerable quantity of the gas to be measured. Professor Ramsay has, however, shown in his work with argon and helium that it is possible to determine the density with accuracy with a quantity as small as thirty cubic centimeters. T. Schloesing, Jr., has now described, in the *Comptes Rendus*, an ingenious method devised by him which is simple, rapid, and accurate within 0.1%, and can be carried out with only a few cubic centimeters of gas. It is based upon balancing in a U-tube two gases, one of which is easily absorbable and whose density is known. After equilibrium is attained, the known gas is absorbed (as carbon dioxid by potash) in order to determine the invisible surface of separation. Very narrow tubes are used to reduce the unavoidable diffusion of the gases, and this has the advantage of reducing the quantity of gas necessary for determination. Hydrogen alone of gases yet examined diffuses too rapidly for the determination of its density. It would seem that this method will prove of great use.

Another paper from the *Comptes Rendus* should be noted in which D. Berthelot describes a new determination of the fusing points of silver and gold. A platinum-iridium thermo-electric cell was used for the purpose, and the melting-point of silver found to be 962° as an average of six experiments, while that of gold is 1064°. These figures are not far from those of Violle: silver 954°, gold 1035°; and the

earlier figures of Becquerel: silver 960°, gold 1092°. Among earlier observations for silver are Guyton de Morveau 1034°, Princep 1000°, Ledebur 960° and Daniell 1223°; for gold, Pictet 1100°, Pouillet 1200° and Wegele 1250°. The variation is not surprising when one considers the meagre means for determination at the hands of the early observer; it is rather surprising that they came so near the truth.

THE *Mitglieder-Verzeichniss* of the Deutsche chemische Gesellschaft for 1898 is just at hand and shows a list of 2989 members, making it the largest chemical society and perhaps the largest scientific society of the world. Its members are by no means confined to Germany, 1268 or over 42% being from other countries, so that it may almost be considered international in its scope. It also indicates the domination of Germany in chemistry. Almost every civilized and some hardly civilized countries are represented in its membership. This country has 285 members and Great Britain 232, these two furnishing over 40% of the membership outside of Germany. Next to these come Austria with 141 members, Switzerland with 131, and Russia with 118.

J. L. H.

SCIENTIFIC NOTES AND NEWS.

THE WASHINGTON ACADEMY OF SCIENCES.

THE Washington Academy of Sciences adopted on March 29th the following schedule of functions:

1. The holding of meetings to receive the annual addresses of the Presidents of the affiliated societies.

2. The holding of meetings (*a*) to listen to scientific communications from prominent authorities specially invited for the purpose, and (*b*) to hear from selected members of the affiliated societies résumés of recent progress, statements of important questions pending in their respective branches, and other matters of general scientific interest.

3. The publication of proceedings in cooperation with the affiliated societies.

4. The inauguration of measures looking to the provision of a building for the use of the Academy and the affiliated societies.

5. The acquisition of a fund to be used in aid of scientific research.

The Medical Society has been added to the affiliated societies. The list of officers for 1898 is as follows:

President, J. R. Eastman.

Vice-Presidents: From the Anthropological Society, J. W. Powell; from the Biological Society, L. O. Howard; from the Chemical Society, H. N. Stokes; from the Entomological Society, W. H. Ashmead; from the Geographic Society, A. Graham Bell; from the Geological Society, Charles D. Walcott; from the Medical Society, S. C. Busey; from the Philosophical Society, F. H. Bigelow.

Secretary, G. K. Gilbert.

Treasurer, Bernard R. Green.

Managers: Class of 1901—Marcus Baker, Henry S. Pritchett, George M. Sternberg. Class of 1900—F. W. Clarke, C. Hart Merriam, Lester F. Ward. Class of 1899—Frank Baker, Carroll D. Wright.

THE HONORARY WALKER PRIZE.

IN 1864 the late Dr. William Johnson Walker gave to the Boston Society of Natural History a prize fund from which the Council of the Society may, not oftener than once in five years, grant a Grand Honorary Prize. This award may be five hundred or a thousand dollars, at the option of the Council. In previous years this prize has been awarded four times: first, in 1873 to Mr. Alexander Agassiz for his investigations into the embryology, geographical distribution and natural history of the echinoderms; secondly, in 1880 to Professor Joseph Leidy for his prolonged investigations and discoveries in zoology and paleontology; thirdly, in 1884 to Professor James Hall for his contribution to North American paleontology; and fourthly, in 1892 to Professor James Dwight Dana for his distinguished services in natural history.

At the meeting of the Council of the Society held April 20th it was voted to award the Grand Honorary Walker Prize of one thousand dollars to Mr. Samuel Hubbard Scudder, of Cambridge, for his contributions to entomology, recent and fossil. It is surely unnecessary here to dwell upon Mr. Scudder's life-long devotion to science. His contributions to the study of fossil insects of all orders and from all formations, and of the Orthoptera and the Lepidoptera, are