

CURRENT NOTES ON ANTHROPOLOGY.

INITIATION CEREMONIES IN AUSTRALIA.

THE *bora* is the ceremony in many Australian hordes by which the boy is introduced into manhood. It has been described many times, by no one more sympathetically than by Mr. A. B. Howitt, who inherited the literary talent of his distinguished parents, William and Mary Howitt.

No description of it, however, has heretofore been offered of its ceremonial as practiced on the table land of New South Wales and that neighborhood. This is presented by Mr. R. H. Mathews in the *Proceedings* of the American Philosophical Society for July, 1898 (No. 157). It there bears the name *bürbüng*. He explains the ritual with much minuteness, and adds a map on which is defined the boundaries of the several districts within which each type of ceremony is in force. He adds an appendix on the *nguttan*, an abbreviated initiation rite practiced by some tribes.

THE TARASCAN LANGUAGE.

THE language known as Tarascan is spoken by the natives of the State of Michoacan. Its words are long, vocalic and sonorous. Previous to the Conquest the Tarascans were a semi-civilized people, city-builders, agricultural and peacefully inclined.

An 'Arte' of their tongue written by Father Gilberti was printed in Mexico in 1558, and now belongs among the rarest of Americana. Dr. Nicolas Leon, formerly Director of the Michoacan Museum, has accomplished an acceptable work to students of such subjects by editing a nearly facsimile edition of it (Mexico, 1898, pp. 344). He deserves the greatest credit for its accuracy. A limited number of copies have been placed on sale with the house of Hiersemann, Leipzig.

ANTHROPOLOGICAL PESSIMISM.

THERE has been a curious tendency dur-

ing the last decade among European anthropologists toward scientific pessimism. Numerous writers, such as Le Bon, Lapouge, Ribot, Nordau, Vierkandt, Nadailac, etc., have deplored the traits of modern culture and seen in many of them signs of degeneration. The white race is to be overwhelmed, Europe is to lose its prestige, modern society is to go to the bad. The Latin race is to fall before the Teutonic, the Teutonic before the Slavic, and so on. M. Novicou, in a book reviewed in the *Centralblatt für Anthropologie*, calls a halt to these lamentations. He argues that when racial, national and social jealousies cease, the species will be much better off; and what these scientific 'calamity howlers' are grieving about is precisely this advancement. (*L'avenir de la race blanche*, Paris, 1897.)

D. G. BRINTON.

UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA.

NOTES ON INORGANIC CHEMISTRY.

A RECENT number of the *Zeitschrift für physikalische Chemie* contains two interesting investigations. The influence of various vapors on the luminosity of phosphorus has been long known; as that it is non-luminous in pure oxygen unless the pressure is reduced, that turpentine destroys the luminosity, etc. Herr Centnerszwer has experimented with a large number of substances. In the case of organic compounds he finds that in homologous series the influence increases with the number of carbon atoms, and is approximately the same for isomers. It increases with double linking of carbon atoms; is little affected by replacement of hydrogen by chlorine or bromine, but largely affected by iodine substitution. No clue is suggested to the cause of the phenomena.

THE second article is by M. Tanatar on the perborates. These are formed by the electrolysis of a concentrated solution of