

title of 'Guide Leaflet,' is an illustrated handbook to the butterflies found within fifty miles of New York City. It comprises 52 pages and 96 figures and should be in demand by local entomologists.

AN English dealer in minerals was the first to advertise volcanic dust from Mt. Pelée, and the British Museum is the first, and only one, to make a special exhibit illustrating the recent volcanic eruptions in the West Indies. This, as described in *The Museums Journal*, comprised a series of maps and diagrams showing the geography of the Lesser Antilles and the relations of their volcanoes to the general structure of the globe, and particularly to the disturbed area in Central America. Pictures and photographs give an idea of the scenery, buildings, vegetation and human inhabitants of the ruined islands. The poverty of the fauna and flora, due perhaps to previous eruptions, is likewise illustrated by specimens and drawings. Various products of the present and previous eruptions are exhibited and explained, while near by is an exhibit of typical volcanic products from various sources, all carefully labeled. Pictures and photographs illustrate the eruptive phenomena of other volcanoes, and extinct or possibly dormant volcanoes of other parts of the world.

SOCIETIES AND ACADEMIES.

THE ANTHROPOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF WASHINGTON.

THE 331st meeting was held April 22. Dr. Emily Brainerd Ryder gave a talk on the Parsees of Bombay, and exhibited costumes, religious objects and a model of a Tower of Silence.

Dr. Ryder spent a great many years in India, and is thoroughly familiar with the customs and religion of the followers of Zoroaster. In describing their religion she stated that before they were driven from Persia, their native country, by the Mohammedan invaders, their temples, in which the sacred and eternal fire was kept burning, were in the form of round towers, seven stories in height, seven being a sacred number in their religion. When they fled into India they de-

cided, in order to live in peace with the Hindoos, that they would build fire temples small in size and in out-of-the-way places, so as to attract as little attention as possible. Hence, all over India their places of worship are small and obscure, in comparison with the temples and mosques of other religious bodies, notwithstanding the fact that they are the wealthiest and most progressive people in India.

In these temples the sacred fire, the symbol of Ahriman, the sun or god, burns on an altar of white stone. Three priests relieve each other at the end of every eight hours, and every time the fire is replenished with sandal wood, a gong is struck to notify outsiders that the sacred fire is being promptly tended and watched. In the opening of a new temple the fire of its altar has to be obtained from heaven; in other words, it must be a part of the divine or electric spark, and frequently it is months before this can be obtained.

According to the Zoroastrian faith, the human body, after the soul has departed, must not be allowed to pollute the air, the water, or the earth, and for that reason the Parsees have what they call their Towers of Silence, a large, round, roofless building, in which the remains of their dead are exposed to be devoured by vultures. The body is carried to its last resting place on a bier, the priest following leading a white dog of a peculiar breed with a yellow spot over either eye. Just before reaching the gate of the tower the face of the dead is uncovered, to let the sun shine upon it for the last time, after which the priest holds the dog's nose toward the face of the dead four times, and from all four quarters. The animal is called the 'four-eyed dog,' and this curious custom is so old that, in Mrs. Ryder's opinion, the Parsees have lost its meaning and significance.

'The Vinter's Bush' was the title of a paper read by Dr. H. Carrington Bolton, on the ancient custom of using a bush as a wineshop sign in the same manner that three balls are used as a sign by pawnbrokers, and a striped pole by barbers. He was followed by Mr. G. H. Matthes, who has lately returned from Sumatra, who read a paper on the Malays of

that island, illustrating his paper with a series of lantern pictures.

The 332d meeting was held May 6. Lieut. W. E. Safford, U. S. N., read a paper on the ethnobotany of Guam. Lieut. Safford remained a long time in Guam in an official capacity, and while there made an extended study of the island and its inhabitants. The paper showed the carefulness of Lieut. Safford's observations and the enthusiasm with which he took up this study. Contrary to common belief, the natives are slightly mixed and speak a pure Malayan tongue. They are industrious, own and cultivate land, and make use of the feral and introduced plants to a remarkable degree.

Dr. John R. Swanton, of the Bureau of Ethnology, gave an account of the social organization of the Haida Indians. Dr. Swanton is familiar with the language of these Indians and has studied their customs for several years.

It is an interesting fact that the Haidas set apart, near their villages, parks and playgrounds for their children. The affairs of their towns are administered by the village chief, the house chief, and the clan chief. It is, apparently, the duty of the chief to earn as much property as he can in order to give it away for the purpose of rendering himself great and of confusing his enemies.

Dr. Swanton says that the chiefs and their families have a morality of their own; that is, they must live up to their station in life.

The system of relationship is quite complicated and is diagrammatically shown by Dr. Swanton.

The supernatural beings are eagles and ravens, the raven being the greater. They believe that a supernatural being resides under the Haida land and supports it.

In discussing this interesting paper Professor McGee pointed out, in connection with the table of relationship, that the law of marriage is more stringent in a low stage of civilization than it is in a high stage of civilization, contrary to the accepted beliefs of the social organizations of the Indians.

The 333d meeting was held May 20. A por-

tion of this closing meeting for the season was given to remarks on deceased members.

Dr. George M. Kober paid a tribute to Dr. W. W. Johnston, whose death was a severe loss to the people of Washington.

A eulogy on the late Thomas Wilson was read by Professor Otis T. Mason. Following this, an interesting paper on the origin of the United States decimal money was read by Dr. William H. Seaman.

WALTER HOUGH.

DISCUSSION AND CORRESPONDENCE.

ZOOLOGICAL NOMENCLATURE.

TO THE EDITOR OF SCIENCE: While believing that a more thorough study of the existing literature on zoological nomenclature would clear up most of Dr. Cook's uncertainties, while I would especially recommend him to read my report on the subject, of 1877, to the American Association for the Advancement of Science, and admitting for myself less familiarity with the problems of purely botanical nomenclature—there are still some points in his letter in SCIENCE, No. 392, p. 30, which seem to call for notice. The necessity for types as a basis for modern genera I appreciate, I believe, fully. It is only when hasty methods of selection, upsetting work already done and promising no more definite stability than present methods, are proposed, that any hesitation is called for.

It seems to be most difficult to induce naturalists who have not made a special study of nomenclature, to get clearly fixed the idea that nomenclature is necessarily arbitrary, and that unless this principle is admitted to start with, stability is hopeless. Thus the acceptance of the tenth edition of the 'Systema Naturæ' as the starting point, though based on sound reasons, is nevertheless an arbitrary decision, and having been generally accepted should be adhered to. Dr. Cook thinks that because certain naturalists have violated the rules excluding vernacular names, therefore violation is justified and must be accepted; but laws are not enforced in that way. The laws are intended to and will, if followed, bring about stability, but it is preposterous