

would suggest for the consideration of the Society for the Promotion of Engineering Education the following partial improvement in the method of requests for desk copies:

1. All requests for desk copies to be sent to the publishers only by the deans of colleges, and not directly by individual teachers or heads of departments. This would insure more justice, uniformity and dignity.

2. All free copies to remain the permanent property of the college, and not of individual teachers. This will reduce the number of requests to a reasonable amount.

3. Whenever possible, teachers and colleges ought to purchase books and avoid asking for complimentary copies.

V. KARAPETOFF

CORNELL UNIVERSITY

SCIENTIFIC BOOKS

Melanesians and Polynesians; Their Life Histories Described and Compared. By GEORGE BROWN, D.D. London, MacMillan & Co. 1910. Pp. 451, 70 illustrations. Price, \$3.00.

The work is a comparative study of two groups of mankind generally supposed to have next to nothing in common. The relationship of these groups, however, has been maintained by some students since the epoch-making explorations of Wallace, who considered the Pacific peoples as variants of one race. Mr. Brown's theory, based principally on the languages concerned, in which he is an authority, is that a Negrito substratum formerly occupied the East Indies as far west as Borneo, also the continental skirts, and this stock became diluted by infusion of blood from India. Later the pressure of Malay tribes drove them out into the Pacific, the Polynesians having the greatest admixture of a light brown stock drifting to some point of radiation, perhaps Manua of the Samoan group, and the Melanesians, retaining more of the blood of the original black inhabitants, dispersed to the islands where they live at present. The Melanesians are thus regarded as the older, less commingled stock.

His long residence in New Britain and

Samoa and his command of the native languages fit Mr. Brown especially for the work and his opinions are entitled to great respect. The intention to establish by comparison the cultural affiliation of the dusky and fair-brown peoples has produced a most interesting and valuable body of observations charmingly presented in clear English, not only a contribution to science in the way of an almost unique comparative study, but a non-controversial book well worth reading for general information.

WALTER HOUGH

Herpetology of Missouri. By JULIUS HURTER, SR., Curator, Academy of Science of St. Louis, Mo. Pp. 215; 12 pl. relating to structural characteristics.

There have been various *resumés* of the fauna of states, these publications of more or less economic value, but it is genuinely pleasing to note the appearance of the present work in which it is evident throughout that the author has devoted much labor and time in presenting a detailed and practical review. A publication like this stands as a fine example of what should be forthcoming from other workers on local fauna. Carefully systematized it also treats those economic features which greatly enlarge the field of usefulness. Too many of our local scientific workers devote a great amount of time and space to the treatment of synonyms, forgetting that this phase of their subject is of absolutely no interest to the great mass of readers, eagerly awaiting the zoological history of their home territory.

The farmer, the natural science teacher and the younger student will find Mr. Hurter's work of immediate and practical interest, while the technical descriptions are sufficiently elaborate to properly identify any of the species. There is a series of well-prepared plates relating to the mouth characters of salamanders and frogs, the foot characters of the latter, the scalation of serpents and like characters.

Looking through the systematic arrangement, one notes several apparently recent

changes in the nomenclature relating to families and genera. The author of the publication remarks that he has adhered strictly to the "International Rules of Zoological Nomenclature," adopted by the International Congress of Zoology. It seems a pity these adopted rules have been followed by the frequent discoveries that names familiar for the past quarter of a century and more, can no longer be permitted to stand. These never-ending changes and the constant growth of the list of synonyms bring about perplexing conditions, even to the technical worker. Some remedy might result, by accepting as a standard, a monumental world's work like Boulenger's "Catalogue of Reptiles of the British Museum." Time would, of course, elicit modifications, but with a standard agreed upon our technical workers would find more time for investigations along more original and generally valuable lines.

RAYMOND L. DITMARS

NEW YORK ZOOLOGICAL PARK

A REMARKABLE JOURNEY ACROSS THE
SAHARA

ONE of the most daring journeys conceivable on the Sahara has recently been successfully accomplished by Count René le More who, almost alone, went from southern Algeria directly across the desert to Timbuctu. The journey of about 8,000 kilometers altogether, to Timbuctu and return, occupied about 13 months, of which three were passed in Timbuctu.

Leaving Ghardaia in November, 1910, le More reached Timbuctu in the last of April. He returned by nearly the same route. Discarding all precedents in Saharan travel, le More was accompanied by only two persons, a servant and an interpreter-guide, both of whom were Arabs. He had one Touareg riding camel and two small Algerian baggage camels, and carried the minimum amount of baggage, of which two or three American guns formed a prominent and a useful part.

No account of this journey has yet appeared, but in *Le Matin*, January 15, 1912,

there is an interview giving some of the main facts. The route taken in going was by Ghardaia, el Golea, In Salah, Tamanrauet, Kidal to Gan Gao, on the Niger River, thence by the river to Timbuctu. On the return a slightly different course was taken, passing somewhat to the west of Timanrauet, but retracing the previous way from In Salah.

The entire journey was perilous, not only because of the natural dangers attending desert travel, but especially on account of hostile tribes. Soon after le More left Ghardaia, I was told by an officer that the venturesome Frenchman would hardly be able to pass through the Touareg country with so small a company, the Touaregs would surely cut off his head. On the way le More went 29 days, going south from Timanrauet, without seeing any person outside of his own caravan. On the return the little company had exciting adventures in fighting off bands of robbers, coming off with better luck than other travelers through the region. Graves of several unfortunates were seen between Kidal and Gan Gao.

The purpose of the intrepid traveler was to study the country that he might later cross to Timbuctu by aeroplane. As a result he knows the best, or the only situation for relay stations, and much of the conditions attending desert travel, and he considers the project as possible of accomplishment. The result is that le More proposes to cross the desert again, but the next time in the air. Whether this difficult task is finally accomplished by le More remains to be seen, but there is little doubt that in the very near future aeroplanes will not be unknown in the extreme southern part of Algeria, since it is said that the French army in the colony has been actively engaged for several months in working out the details of an aeroplane corps with headquarters at Biskra.

Owing in large part to its relatively high elevation above the sea, the western Sahara is not so intensely arid as the eastern Sahara. In the vicinity of Ouargla and Ghardaia, for example, there is considerable vegetation, especially along the oueds. Le More's photo-