genus, it is possible to avoid the inconsistency of having polyphyletic genera, but only at the expense of considerable practical confusion. By going to the other extreme and dividing *Megascolex* into as many genera as there are probable lines of descent, we employ a logical method, but have before us a series of generic units which are extremely difficult to distinguish or define. We may suppose that posterity will on the whole prefer the second method, and will remove what would now be ambiguities by more intensive morphological and biological studies. In one case, Col. Stephenson states the dilemma very clearly. The genus *Plutellus* has given rise to a group called *Fletcherodrilus* by the fusion of certain paired structures. The morphological deviation is considerable, but if *Fletcherodrilus* is recognized, it has to consist of two species, which have arisen quite independently from *Plutellus* in India and Australia respectively. It is here assumed that *Fletcherodrilus* must be based wholly on the characters mentioned, but very likely some author will find other characters in the Indian species (*P. palniensis*), and will make it the type of a new genus.

It will be readily seen that the work is of interest to all biologists, whether they have occasion to study Indian worms or not. It contains a very excellent account of the general features of these animals, and full directions for their study. Were the reviewer possessed of adequate funds, he could think of no greater service than to make possible the publication of a Fauna of North America on the same lines as the Fauna of British India. We have the men who could write the volumes, given time enough. We certainly have the resources for publication, could they only be diverted into such productive channels. The volumes on the Indian Fauna, published by authority of the government, are reasonably condensed, yet full enough to supply the information desired. They are well printed and contain many illustrations. The style of publication is not extravagant and they are accordingly sold for a very moderate price. It is not unlikely that a North American series, thus conceived, would pay its way. It would, however, need an initial subsidy, as in the case of the much more condensed and far less adequate North American Flora, which is now or was recently self-supporting.

T. D. A. COCKERELL

UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO,
Boulder, Nov. 28, 1924

Maker, Man and Matter. Thread of Life Series I. By PIERSON WORRALL BANNING. International Book Concern, Los Angeles, California.

THIS is a volume of fantasy, purporting to deal with facts, of the type termed by Fechner, "cuckoos' eggs laid in the nest of science." It describes the development of the earth from the time when it was rolled out flat and inhabited by the first of the "four root races," invisible, boneless, sexless and ubiquitous, up to the year 7120 B. C. The period of the first root race (which followed the condensation of the whirlpool nebulae accomplished by electrons in the vortex of energy) lasted, we are told, 575,377,000 years. With the second root race, the hyperborean continent gradually extended towards the equator, forming, about 500,000,000 B. C., the continent of Lemuria inhabited 200,000,000 years by the third root race. The fourth root race began on the "lost Atlantis" nearly a million years ago, this continent breaking up, 100,000 to 200,000 years ago amid shocking episodes. It is to be succeeded by the new continents of Numerica and Nulantis, and so on. The book leans heavily on quotations from Blavatzky, Besant, Donnelly and other noted sciosophists treated as scientific authorities. Baron Münchhausen is, however, not even mentioned.

It is, in fact, an expanded fairy tale, conceived and told without genius or charm of any sort.

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SPECIAL ARTICLES

NOTES ON THE OLFACTORY AND OTHER PHYSIOLOGICAL REACTIONS OF THE CALIFORNIA HAGFISH[1]

POLISTOTREMA STOUTI is an interesting representative of the Marsipobranchii, the lowest of the vertebrates save amphioxus. The species is found in abundance in the waters of Monterey Bay and has held the interest of systematists (1), anatomists (2), morphologists (3), embryologists (4), and physiologists (5) since the opening of the Hopkins Marine Station of Stanford University in 1892 on the rocky Point Aulon on the south shore of Monterey Bay. No less than five young investigators of the station in the early years, all now prominent in science and in medicine, made extensive anatomical studies of the hagfish with drawings adequate for publication. Actual anatomical publication was first accomplished for the circulatory system by Dr. C. M. Jackson (2) under the inspiration of Professor Howard Ayers.

Nothing was known of the embryology of the hagfish until the eggs were found and identified in 1893. Even then many of the eggs obtained through an intelligent and shrewd Chinese fisherman, Ah Tak, were decomposed or partly digested. Ah Tak claimed

[1] From the Hopkins Marine Station of Stanford University and the University of Missouri.