

like outlets in its north-facing escarpment, and then traverse a sloping plain that descends to a barren sandy strip before reaching the sea. They form the natural paths of travel by which the hill tribesmen always go to and from the coast.

W. M. DAVIS.

HARVARD UNIVERSITY.

CURRENT NOTES ON ANTHROPOLOGY.

STUDIES IN MAYAN HIEROGLYPHS.

It is as agreeable as it is rare to find a sane student of the Mayan hieroglyphs. For that reason among others it is pleasurable to mention several articles which have appeared lately from the pen of Mr. Lewis W. Gunckel, of Dayton, Ohio.

Two of these are in the *American Antiquarian* for the present year. They are entitled, 'The numeral signs in the Palenque tablets,' and 'An Analysis of the day-signs in the Palenquen inscriptions.' A third is in the *American Anthropologist* for May on, 'The direction in which Mayan inscriptions should be read.' All of these indicate thorough investigation and calm judgment, as well as a good acquaintance with what his predecessors in the field have accomplished. The method pursued is scientific and the presentation of the results temperate.

Of course, some of such results may have to be modified by future research, and they may not be good in all cases, that is, in other parts of the field; but the plan which Mr. Gunckel has adopted of approaching these intricate problems is one sure to be productive of additions to our positive knowledge concerning them.

PRIMITIVE DECORATIVE ART.

For the analysis of primitive art-motives no paper has appeared for a long while more instructive than that by Dr. Franz Boas in the *Bulletin of the American Museum of Natural History*, Vol. IX., en-

titled 'The decorative art of the Indians of the North Pacific Coast.' The tribes whom he has in view are celebrated for the abundance of their painting and sculpture, their totem poles, colored dishes and carved pipes, and all are somewhat familiar with their strange and perplexing designs. These are analyzed in the article referred to with masterly skill, and the text is furnished with ample and accurate illustrations, which enable the reader to follow the demonstration step by step.

Certain general principles furnish the key to these primitive art-motives. It was the aim of the artist to bring into prominence the most specific feature of the animal he drew, and yet to show as much of the whole of it as he could. As he knew nothing of perspective, he resorted to the most curious devices to accomplish his aim. He represented his subject in sections and distortions, and sometimes by its specific feature reduced to a mere symbol, as a beaver by its incisor teeth only. Many of these devices belong to primitive art generally, and hence this paper will efficiently aid the student in other fields than the Northwest Coast.

D. G. BRINTON.

UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA.

SCIENTIFIC NOTES AND NEWS.

WE publish elsewhere a full report, by the General Secretary, of the Detroit meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. Although the attendance was small, the scientific programs were in many sections unusually strong and promise well for the future of the Association. A notable meeting on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the Association next year at Boston, with Professor Putnam as President and Mr. Howard as Permanent Secretary, is assured.

WE are glad to be able to publish in this issue the address of the President of the British Association, given on Wednesday of this week. The addresses of the Presidents of the Sections