

"spend much of their time basking in the sun, and if the sun does not yield sufficient warmth, they scoop out a hole in the ground, burn in it branches and leaves of the maguey, and, when properly heated, lay themselves down in the place, and cover themselves with a mat or the loose earth" (p. 637).

Among the Zapotecs a very interesting art of divination prevailed, and to some extent is still practised. "When a woman was about to be confined, the relatives assembled in the hut, and commenced to draw on the floor figures of different animals, rubbing each one out as soon as it was completed. This operation continued till the moment of birth, and the figure that then remained sketched upon the ground was called the child's *tona*, or second self. When the child grew old enough, he procured the animal that represented him, and took care of it, as it was believed that health and existence were bound up with that of the animals; in fact, that the death of both would occur simultaneously" (p. 661). To conclude the list, among the tribes of North California, the development of the idea of current value, depending partly upon the utility and partly on the scarcity of the objects circulating, is most quaintly illustrated. Their wealth consists in shell-money, called *allicochick*, white deer-skins, canoes, and, indirectly, in women. The shell which is the regular circulating medium is white, hollow, about a quarter of an inch through, and from one to two inches in length. On its length depends its value. A gentleman, who writes from personal observation, says: "All of the older Indians have tattooed on their arms their standard of value. A piece of shell corresponding in length to one of the marks being worth five dollars 'Boston money,' the scale gradually increases until the highest mark is reached. For five perfect shells corresponding in length to this mark they will readily give one hundred dollars in gold or silver." White deer-skins are rare, and considered very valuable, the possession of one being even said to give a claim to chiefship. A scalp of the red-headed woodpecker is equivalent to about five dollars, and is extensively used as currency on the Klamath. Canoes are valued according to their size and finish. Wives, as they must be bought, are a sign of wealth, and the owner of many is respected accordingly (p. 347).

Our notice of Mr. Bancroft's first volume, consisting as it does merely of condensed accounts of the appearance and habits of wild tribes, is almost necessarily fragmentary. We look forward to the promised speedy publication of the remaining four volumes, of which the next will describe the more civilised nations of Mexico and Central America, the other three containing the comparison and discussion of the native languages, mythology, &c. When the whole work is completed, it may probably lead to the ethnology of America taking a new departure, and passing from its present chaotic condition into a more orderly and scientific state.

#### OUR BOOK SHELF

*Quelques Nombres Caractéristiques relatifs à la Température de Bruxelles.* Note de M. Ern. Quetelet, 6 pp.

THIS small tract briefly summarises the chief points of popular interest in the climate of Brussels relating to the

temperature. The following are the data tabulated which have been calculated from observations made during the forty years 1833-1872:—The mean temperature of the year, seasons, and months; the absolutely highest temperature of each summer, and lowest of each winter; the absolute maxima and minima of each day of the year during any of the forty years; and the mean temperature of every day of the year; together with some other points of interest, such as the degree to which the temperature has risen every summer and fallen every winter. Such tables, if worked out for other places at which the necessary observations have been made, could not fail to prove of great general utility to horticulturists and others, particularly those which show not only the mean temperature of any particular day of the year, but also the degree to which for that day the temperature has been known in the past to rise on the one hand and fall on the other.

Some interesting points appear in connection with the periods of unusually cold and warm weather which are known to occur in North-western Europe at different times of the year. Thus the cold weather of May is not only shown in the forty years' mean temperature of the days, but also in the absolute maximum temperatures which have been noted on the particular days during any of the forty years—the mean of these maxima of the five days from the 6th to the 10th May being 80°·3, but of the five days from the 11th to the 16th only 77°·6.

*A Report of Microscopical and Physiological Researches into the Nature of the Agent or Agents producing Cholera.* (Second Series.) By T. R. Lewis, M.B., and D. D. Cunningham, M.B. (Calcutta: Government Printing Office, 1874.)

MESSRS. Lewis and Cunningham are already well known for their minute and valuable researches on the agencies by means of which diseases are spread. The paper before us, which is one of the Appendices to the "Tenth Annual Report of the Sanitary Commissioner with the Government of India," is divided into three parts. Part I. is concerned with the microscopic examination of the blood, giving the results of such an examination in health, in cholera, and in diseases other than cholera; part II. describes the results of experiments on the introduction of choleraic and other organic fluids into the system; and Part III. gives an account of experiments on the section of the splanchnic and mesenteric nerves. In addition to a discussion of the results of the experiments, the details of the experiments themselves are carefully arranged in a number of tables throughout the work. While the experiments herein described are of high value from a practical medical point of view, they cannot fail to shed some light on the broader scientific question of the origin of Bacteria. From the latter point of view, those parts of the Report bearing on the question of the existence of living organisms in the tissues of healthy subjects after death, and also those portions referring to the effect of heat on morbid products, are of special importance. How do these organisms originate in the glandular and other tissues, and why don't they develop whilst the tissues are in a normal living state? We hope that in a future Report the authors will be able to present some data which will help towards a solution of these questions.

#### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

[The Editor does not hold himself responsible for opinions expressed by his correspondents. Neither can he undertake to return, or to correspond with the writers of, rejected manuscripts. No notice is taken of anonymous communications.]

##### Ocean Waves

IN reference to the letter in NATURE, vol. xi. p. 386, respecting the "Height of Waves," it may be noted that the data presented would give about 110 ft. for the height above the sea