

time of vibration of some vibrator.—J. K. E. Halm: Astronomical photometry. An account was given of a method which claims to derive from the measured diameters of the star discs on a photographic plate the brightness or "magnitude" of any star on a self-consistent basis. The work is founded on the examination of the properties of the photographic plate in the light of experiments made by Abney and Kron. The results obtained for the stars of the Cape astrographic zones demonstrate a perfect agreement of the Cape system with the Harvard photographic system. Comparisons between the photographic and visual magnitudes lead to the conclusion, also in agreement with the Harvard results, that the "colour" of the stars is a function of their brightness, faint stars being slightly redder than bright stars. This fact is tentatively attributed to the existence of absorbing matter in space. The phenomenon is emphasised in the regions of the galaxy. It is also found that, on the average, stars are actinically brighter in the Milky Way than in other regions.—W. A. Jolly: The electromotive changes accompanying activity in the mammalian ureter.—I. B. Pole Evans: A new aloe from Swaziland. A new species of aloe, found in Swaziland by Mr. R. A. Davis in June, 1914, was described and named *Aloe suprafoliata*. It may be recognised by its distichous leaves, which are rigid, somewhat fleshy, and patent or gracefully recurved. The flower spike is slender, unbranched, and bears rather loosely-attached rose doree flowers. The plants are usually found on the tops of quartzite kopjes, and have been found at Stegi, Lebombo Range, and Forbes Reef.

CALCUTTA.

Asiatic Society of Bengal, August 4.—S. C. Mitra: North Indian charms for securing immunity from the virus of scorpion-sting. Charms which are popularly supposed to render the user thereof either invulnerable to the stings of scorpions or immune from their virus, e.g. :—(1) By the repetition of certain passages of the Koran; (2) by performing the fire-walking ceremony known as *Dam madar*; and (3) by carrying about one's person the medicinal plant known as the *Chirchira* (*Achyranthes aspera*). The author also described the preparation and discussed the origin of a curious cognate charm whereby a practitioner acquires the power to cure scorpion stings, after rubbing with his hands, while he is in a blindfolded state, the blossoms of a mango tree.—I. H. Burkill: The Terai Forests between the Gandak and the Tista.—Dr. N. Annandale: The origin and distribution of the fauna of the Lake Tiberias. The aquatic fauna of the Jordan river-system, and in particular that of the Lake of Tiberias, consists mainly of species belonging to Palæarctic genera, and closely allied to, if not identical with, forms from eastern Europe or from the Euphrates Valley. There are, however, a certain number of animals that are Ethiopian either in genus or species. It is a remarkable fact that the distinctly Ethiopian forms are all fish. There are a considerable number of endemic species in the Lake of Tiberias, but none of them are very highly specialised. The only endemic genus is the sponge *Cortispongilla*. The presence of African fish can only be explained by a former connection through the south of the system with the "Erythraean River" of Gregory, which received a tributary from Central Africa. The fish of African origin all belong to families and genera that are particularly suited to survive unfavourable conditions. The view is put forward that they have been able to survive great changes of salinity in the water of different parts of the Jordan system, while any African invertebrates that may have made their way into it have perished, with the possible exception of a few very widely dis-

tributed mollusca (such as *Melania tuberculata*) and other forms that exist in tropical Asia as well as in Africa.—S. C. Banerji: A botanical curio. A huge epiphytic *Ficus bengalensis*, L., on a tall *Borassus flabellifer*, L., is to be found in the village Bara on the way to Páthrole from Madhupur (Sonthal Parganas). The two together appear to be a composite tree. One-half of the height of the palm from the ground, excepting a small portion at the base, is completely encased by the root of the fig. The persistence of the epiphytism is interesting.

BOOKS RECEIVED.

- Canada. Department of Mines. Geological Survey. Memoir 69: Coal Fields of British Columbia. Compiled by D. B. Downing. Pp. iii+350. (Ottawa: Government Printing Bureau.)
Identification of Common Carbon Compounds. By J. N. Rakshit. Pp. iii+222. (Calcutta: Collegian Office.)
Applied Immunology. By Drs. B. A. Thomas and R. H. Ivy. Pp. xv+359. (Philadelphia and London: J. B. Lippincott Co.) 16s. net.
British Rainfall, 1914. By Dr. H. R. Mill and C. Salter. Pp. 448. (London: E. Stanford, Ltd.) 10s.
War Plants or Products of Intensive Kultur. By C. H. L. Woodhouse. Pp. 24. (London: G. Routledge and Sons, Ltd.) 6d. net.
The Hundred Best Animals. By L. Gask. Pp. 304. (London: G. G. Harrap and Co.) 7s. 6d. net.

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