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Correspondence

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so convenient, embracing as it does the region lying to the eastward, although there is a great deal of interesting information in the accompanying letterpress relative to the Chins and the neighbouring tribes, whose marauding depredations are the cause of the present military operations. No announcement has been made so far of any Survey officers to accompany the forces, but it is almost certain that some surveyors will be deputed to accompany the various columns, for in the valley of the Koladyne river, and on both sides of the water-parting dividing its basin from that of the Irawadi, there is a great deal of topographical work to be done. while the great importance of improving communications between Chittagong and the Upper Irawadi necessitates a thorough examination of the intervening mountains.

**Explorations in Spitzbergen.**—Two travellers, Dr. W. Kükenthal and Dr. A. Walter, members of the Bremen Geographical Society, have this year visited King Charles Land and the west coast of Spitzbergen. On the 2nd May last they set sail from Tromsø in the Norwegian yacht *Berentine*, but suffered shipwreck on the 11th June in Deevie Bay. The outfit of the expedition was fortunately saved, and they started again northwards in the vessel *Cecilie Malene*. Proceeding through Olga Strait and Hinlopen Strait, they reached the north-west of West Spitzbergen. Their surveys there confirm those of the German Arctic expedition of 1868. In the case of King Charles Land, however, along which they coasted several times, existing maps are quite inaccurate. The country consists of two, apparently even three, islands, which extend from 26° 20' to 30° E. long., and from 78° 30' to 78° 57' N. lat., and is of much smaller area than would appear from the surveys of the Norwegian whalers of 1872. According to the longitude just given the east coast should be set back eight degrees (about 110 miles) westwards. Throughout the voyage the condition of the ice was favourable.

**Death of Mr. John Ball, F.R.S.**—The Society has lost one of its most distinguished Members by the death of Mr. John Ball, which event happened at his London residence on the 21st of October. We hope to be able to give an account of his life and services to Geographical Science in our next number.

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## CORRESPONDENCE.

ATHERTON GRANGE, WIMBLEDON.

October 14th, 1889.

SIR,—If you will allow me to do so, I will reply as briefly as possible to the letter of Professor George Davidson (President of the Geographical Society of the Pacific), dated from the "Sub-Office, United States Coast and Geodetic Survey, San Francisco, California, August 6th, 1889," on p. 611 of the 'Proceedings' of the Royal Geographical Society for October last. I quite acknowledge the courteous tone in which it

is couched, as well as the satisfactory character of the explanations—or rather corrections—which he gives. Although Professor Davidson may have found errors in my case as I stated it, the fact remains that Mount St. Elias may turn out to be in Canadian territory after all.

My object was simply to repeat what Mr. Dall had already admitted to you in his letter in the 'Proceedings,' vol. ix. July 1887, and dated "Department of the Interior, U.S. Geological Survey, Washington, D.C., May 25th, 1887," namely (to make use of his own words), that not only has the shore-line of this part of the Pacific coast never been correctly located, but also that the position given by the Coast Survey to Mount St. Elias may possibly be two or three miles out, and that if some of our Alpine climbers should be the first to tread its virgin snows (of the summit), and decide the point in favour of the mother country, American geographers will not grudge the victory.

I was careful merely to express my belief that the observations in 1874 were the only ones taken by the United States Coast Survey as to the position of Mount St. Elias. Whether there were any subsequent ones Professor Davidson does not say. I have reason, however, for supposing that some were made by Commodore Nicholls which had no connection with the latitude and longitude of the peak.

My personal interest in the mountain, as a member of the pioneer expedition, is due to the fact of its being the highest known peak in North America, rising almost sheer from the ocean, and the centre of possibly unparalleled glacial phenomena.

I cannot recollect Professor Davidson's having given me a copy of his work, though I have often wished for one since. It might be interesting to note that the mean of the positions for the peak as given by Captain George Vancouver, the Russian Hydrographic Chart 1378, Tebenkoff (two latitudes), von Buch (Canarien Inseln), and the English Admiralty Chart 2172, is lat.  $60^{\circ} 20' 21''$ , and long.  $140^{\circ} 33' 00''$ . Those given by the United States are lat.  $60^{\circ} 20' 45''$ , and long.  $141^{\circ} 00' 12''$ .

Yours obediently,

HEYWOOD W. SETON-KARR.

The Assist.-Secretary R.G.S.

## Obituary.

**The late Mr. W. W. M'Nair.**—Colonel T. H. Holdich, R.E., sends us from India the following additional details regarding the career of Mr. M'Nair, briefly noticed in our last issue.

Amongst the many practical geographers who have passed away during the year 1889 is Mr. W. M'Nair, of the Indian Survey Department. His career was very closely connected with a new phase of military exploration carried out on the frontier of India, which had gradually superseded the older forms of reconnaissance, and was rendered possible by late improvements in the smaller classes of instruments, and a wider knowledge of the use of the plane-table. For about ten years previous to the Afghan War of 1879, M'Nair was attached to the topographical branch of the Indian Survey, and he had always shown a special aptitude for that class of work, which consists in acquiring a comprehensive grasp of a wide field of geographical detail in the shortest possible space of time. When war broke out, Afghanistan no longer afforded a field for such simple geographical exploration as had already been accomplished during the campaign of 1839-43. A completer military survey of all important districts was required, which would furnish detailed