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Review: The "Français" Antarctic Expedition

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Source: *The Geographical Journal*, Vol. 29, No. 4 (Apr., 1907), pp. 450-451

Published by: geographicalj

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1776760>

Accessed: 15-06-2016 02:54 UTC

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have been avoided. Still, this does not greatly impair the value of his work, and it must be remembered that Mr. Low is, first of all, a geologist, and his geological chapters are most valuable. The book is admirably illustrated, and has this advantage over the usual run of Government reports—that it is very readable.

## AUSTRALASIA AND PACIFIC ISLANDS.

### AUSTRALIAN TRIBES.

'The Native Races of the British Empire. Natives of Australia.' By Northcote W. Thomas, M.A. London: Constable. 1906. Size 9 x 5½, pp. xii., 256. With 32 Plates and a Map. Price 6s. net.

The idea of issuing a series of books dealing with the native races of the British Empire is an excellent one, and if the subsequent volumes are as good as this on the natives of Australia, the success of the series is assured. Such books are exactly what are wanted, as they will enable the general reader, who is interested in the peoples of the empire, to discover the facts about any particular tribe without having to consult a large number of highly technical works, while at the same time they should serve as an incentive to further study.

Mr. Thomas, who is an acknowledged expert on things Australian, has in this volume given a lucid and straightforward account of the various tribes living in the island continent. The book is devoid of technicalities, and, except in general chapters on Social Organization and Marriage, Mr. Thomas has actually steered clear of the subtle bypaths of Totemism, to the great advantage of his readers. The author devotes chapters to the manners and customs, occupations and pursuits of the natives, and in an introductory chapter collects together much useful information on the origin of the people and on the geography and physical features of the country. There is a good map, showing the distribution of the various tribes, while numerous illustrations serve to embellish what must be pronounced to be a valuable introduction to the study of the ethnology of the different tribes inhabiting Australia.

## POLAR REGIONS.

### THE "FRANÇAIS" ANTARCTIC EXPEDITION.

'Journal de l'Expédition antarctique française 1903-1905.' Le Français au Pôle Sud. Par J. B. Charcot, chef de l'expédition. Préface par l'Amiral Fournier. Ouvrage contenant trois cents illustrations et une carte hors texte. Suivi d'un exposé de quelques-uns des travaux scientifiques par les membres de l'état-major, MM. Matha, Rey, Pléneau, Turquet, Gourdon, Charcot. Paris: Ernest Flammarion. 1906.

Dr. Charcot described his expedition in Antarctic seas so recently to the Royal Geographical Society (vol. 26, p. 497) that it is unnecessary to recapitulate the voyage of the *Français* in noticing this book. The public is no longer a stranger to the usual routine of modern Antarctic exploration, and it is a little difficult to present the record of a new expedition with striking novelty, for the essential incidents repeat themselves for every explorer, the scenery of rock and ice varies little wherever the Antarctic area is invaded, the meagre *fauna* of penguins, sea-birds, and seals is alike whenever it is found, and the perpetual struggle with ice and storm and fog, though full of surprises and teeming with fresh situations to the navigator in the thick of it, is not without a certain sameness when it comes to be written down. Although all this is true, we welcome Dr. Charcot's book, not only as a well-told narrative of an important expedition but also as a notable contribution to Antarctic literature. It is well written, the style being easy without frivolity, and the narrative, though

brightened by many pleasant touches, remains perfectly serious. It is well illustrated; the photographs are carefully selected and excellently reproduced.

A useful part of the book is a detailed discussion of the voyage of the German whaler *Dallmann* in 1873-74, in which Dr. Charcot brings forward evidence to show that the Bismarck strait of that navigator was the southern end of Gerlache strait, and not an opening leading to the Weddell sea.

A series of appendices deals concisely with the scientific work of the expedition. Under geography an account is given of the running survey made of the western side of Palmer archipelago and of the Biscoe islands, the position of which had been by no means exactly determined by their discoverer. Attention is called to the existence of a zone of calms between the westerly winds about Cape Horn and the easterly winds prevailing on the Antarctic side. Magnetic and gravity observations were successfully carried on; the conditions of the ice and geology were not neglected; and various branches of biology were fairly exhaustively studied on the spot and from specimens brought home. The result shows that much good work was done. It is gratifying to know that the *Français*, after being repaired at Buenos Aires, was purchased by the Argentine Government, and under the name *El Austral* is now employed in keeping up communication with the meteorological observatories on various Antarctic islands which were established after the expedition of the *Scotia*.

H. R. M.

## MATHEMATICAL AND PHYSICAL GEOGRAPHY.

### SPELEOLOGY.

'Höhlenkunde, mit Berücksichtigung der Karstphänomene.' By Walther von Knebel, DR. PHIL. Braunschweig: Friedrich Vieweg und Sohn. 1906. Pp. xvi. + 222. 42 Figs., 4 Plates. Price 5.50m.

The author of this work starts with the statement, in his preface, that this is the first truly scientific handbook for the study of caves which has ever appeared. All previous works, according to him, were concerned too much with the description of the form and size of caves, their beauties, and the size of their stalactites, to which were usually added a few speculations on the age and origin of caves. Science, however, has but little concern with the matters to which other treatises on speleology have given the greatest attention and, therefore, he has written a really scientific text-book, in which not so much the facts as their origin and causes are dealt with. Working on these principles, he has produced a work of a type not unknown in this country, in which everything is accounted for in no uncertain manner, for which publishers seem to find a demand, which may help to spread an interest in science, but certainly does nothing to forward the spread of a true scientific spirit. As an example, we may take the treatment of those peculiar swallow-holes, of which the best-known examples are the sea-mills at Argostoli, where the sea-water flows continuously and in volume sufficient to drive two water-mills; various explanations of this strange phenomenon have been proposed, all of which are passed in review and rejected, except one, which is unhesitatingly accepted. This one is a possible explanation, though not proved, and, to our mind, less probable than that of Fouqué, which is summarily rejected; this, however, is merely a matter of opinion, but as none of the suggested explanations has been satisfactorily established, the author's attitude is less scientific than that of M. E. A. Martel, who is gravely rebuked for describing the phenomenon as unexplained. Apart from this fault of over-certain settlement of doubtful problems, the book covers the subject it professes to deal with in a satisfactory manner; in one respect it is more than up to date, as the references to E. A. Martel, the founder of the Société