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Review: Some Little-Known West Indian Islands

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mainly to the details of the subject." The value of the book would have been enhanced had the author recognized more fully the great changes that have been made in the theories that were in vogue at the date of his first edition. He devotes much space to Croll's theory of the cause of the ice age, which he describes as still the most plausible of the cosmic theories, and it is apparently this theory to which he refers as "the current astronomical theory." The author does not, however, refer to Sir Robert Ball's restatement of the theory, or to Culverwell's unanswered and apparently unanswerable criticism. Mr. Harmer's paper offering a meteorological explanation is not noticed either in the text or bibliography. The author discusses the date of the ice age, and concludes from the evidence of Niagara, the falls of St. Anthony at Minneapolis, and several interesting but less-known examples, that the ice age terminated in America from eight to ten thousand years ago.

He disputes the longer estimates from Niagara, from (amongst other grounds) his observations of the rate at which the valley is being widened by the weathering back of the cliffs. He estimates that the shale is being cut backward by weathering at the rate of three inches a year, and calculates that, at the rate of only a quarter of an inch a year, the past widening of the gorge by sub-aerial erosion could have been effected in less than ten thousand years. In the discussion upon Niagara the reference to Dr. J. W. Spencer's work seems inadequate.

There is a summary of the statements regarding the North Polar area by Peary and Cook, whose testimony, strange to say, the author appears to regard as of equal value.

The author repeats his argument for the antiquity of man in North America as proved by implements and human remains; but American opinion is apparently still doubtful of the evidence advanced by the author. The Calaveras skull and the man from the Nebraska loess are still accepted by the author as the remains of early man; but the overwhelming balance of opinion in America appears to be that these remains are those of buried Indians. Dr. Wright makes no reference to Hrdlička's monograph on the subject (*Smiths. Inst., Bur. Ethnol., Bull.* 33, 1907).

J. W. G.

#### SOME LITTLE-KNOWN WEST INDIAN ISLANDS.

'A Naturalist on Desert Islands.' By Percy R. Lowe, B.A., M.B. London: Witherby & Co. 1911. 7s. 6d. net.

The author visited some almost unknown islands in the West Indies on Sir Frederic Johnston's yacht. Of these he gives us a pleasant naturalist's account of three groups, with good descriptions of their birds. Two islands, Swan and Little Swan, 98 miles from Honduras, are mainly of coral formation with coral reefs and knolls actively growing up around and between them. Both islets might be termed elevated coral reefs. The basis of Swan is an interesting deposit of a peculiar soft clay, which is formed of radiolarian ooze mixed apparently with both pelagic and bottom-living foraminifera. Abyssal oozes elevated to about 1100 feet, are also known in Barbados, Cuba, and many other West Indian islands, but it is most doubtful whether any deduction as to the existence or non-existence of land along the Panama belt can justifiably be drawn from the presence of such oozes in these islands. Little Swan in other respects seemed to be the more interesting islet, being more elevated, with several coral terraces having walls 10 to 15 feet high. Enough is told the reader to whet his appetite for more, but not enough to enable him either to accept the author's theories or to conceive others of his own.

The next island, Blanquilla, is nearly 100 miles off the coast of Venezuela, north-west of Margarita. It was visited first by Dampier in 1682 A.D., but no one has had much to say about it since. It is about 60 square kilometres in extent, with a patchy coral shore. It is peculiar in that it has a broad elongated belt of elevated coral-limestone along the east side, viz. to windward, and a central area of granite, two plateaus about 200 feet above sea-level, though the limestone had doubtless been much more denuded by rain, wind, heat and cold, etc. The granite is all cactus-covered, while the limestone is densely wooded; the shores are covered with mangroves, and there are a few coconut patches. The author compares its topography before elevation to the present form of the Aves and Los Roques islands, which lie further to the west.

The last islands are the Hermanos, close to the last. The group consists of seven cactus-covered islets of eruptive rocks, only one of which, Orquilla, was visited.

The author is not (and indeed does not profess to be) a geographer, but he is such a good observer and pleasant writer that we wish he were.

J. S. G.

'Pioneers in Canada.' By Sir H. H. Johnston. (London: Blackie. 1912. Pp. xiv., 328. *Maps and Illustrations*, 6s.) What with the author's facile style and copious quotation from the entertaining records of pioneers themselves, this volume ought to arouse the interests (especially among young readers) to which it appeals. The story begins with the Norse discoveries in North America, and is carried in detail down to the early years of the nineteenth century. There is a chapter descriptive of the geography, fauna, and vegetation of the Dominion, which might have served a more useful purpose if it had appeared earlier than the middle of the book, where it appears (though this is, perhaps, a matter of taste) to interrupt the narrative. Some bibliographical notes are given, and altogether the tone of the book is no less scholarly than popular.

'Highways and Byways of the Great Lakes.' By Clifton Johnson. (New York and London: Macmillan. 1911. Pp. xiv., 328. *Illustrations*, 8s. 6d. net.) One of the "American Highways and Byways" series, describing the region of the United States adjacent to the Great Lakes, beginning with Ontario and proceeding upwards. As in the case of other volumes in the series, the author aims here at giving typical sketches rather than facts, and lets his description take form to a large extent in dialect conversations. The effect is an entertaining though homely book, and one in which much of geographical interest is found between the lines. The illustrations are good, but a sketch-map would have been a welcome adjunct.

'South America To-day.' By Georges Clemenceau. (London: Fisher Unwin. 1911. Pp. 315. *Illustrations*, 12s. 6d.) This book is decidedly over-weighted by its title, for the writer visited no more than Argentina, Uruguay, and Brazil, and saw little enough, at least, of the two latter countries. The name of a translator does not appear, but whether M. Clemenceau wrote in his own language or ours, his text preserves the characteristic French lightness of touch and power of description. Buenos Aires and Rio, Argentine wheatfields and cattle ranches, have obtained perhaps more than their fair share of word-picturing in current literature. But the ex-Prime Minister of France is an administrator, and his indications of administrative problems associated with the development of these South American lands will probably be new to most readers.

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'De Buenos-Aires au Gran Chaco.' By J. Huret. (Paris: Charpentier. 1911. Pp. 529. 3fr. 50c.) This book combines mainly travel-narrative and economic study. On those towns and parts of the country which he closely studied the author writes exhaustively; thus he devotes nine chapters to Buenos Aires. In the course of his travels he saw almost every stage of development in various parts of the republic, and the comparisons and contrasts thus afforded are instructive. One long and interesting chapter is tersely headed "Liebig," and he deals fully with the traffic in meat as well as with that in cereals. It would appear that even now a section of opinion in the republic is not free of economic fears, but the writer views the future with confidence. At the close of the volume he quotes a highly suggestive instance of emigration from Australia to the Argentine.

## MATHEMATICAL AND PHYSICAL GEOGRAPHY.

### HANN'S CLIMATOLOGY.

'Handbuch der Klimatologie.' Von Dr. Julius Hann. Band III. Klimatographie. II. Teil. Klima der gemässigten Zonen und der Polarzonen. Mit 10 Abbildungen im Text. Dritte, wesentlich umgearbeitete und vermehrte Auflage. 9 × 7. Stuttgart: J. Engelhorn's Nachf. 1911.

The bulk of this volume, which completes the latest edition of Dr. Hann's standard work on climatology, testifies to the great advance which of late years has been made in the establishment of systematic climatological observations. A work of such unique magnitude is, of course, beyond the reach of effective criticism. We might, however, suggest that climatic description according to the several political boundaries would have been in many ways useful and interesting. We should, for instance, have appreciated a section devoted entirely to the climatology of the British Isles; but we have to be content to find the British Isles dealt with merely in the broad geographical division of "North-Western Europe." In regard to the Polar Regions, Dr. Hann has, of course, availed himself of the results of the numerous recent polar expeditions, and produces the large amount of evidence available in support of the contention that the polar areas, especially the southern, are under high, or relatively high, atmospheric pressure. The existence of the south polar anticyclone is not yet, perhaps, beyond dispute. But theoretical considerations alone would have led us to suspect anti-cyclonic circulation at the poles. It would be difficult to conceive how otherwise the interchange of air-currents between the equatorial and polar regions could be effected, as it is and must be, though in an exceedingly complex manner. If the cold air leaves the polar areas towards warmer latitudes along the surface, the movement must be outwards from centres of high, or relatively higher, pressure, beyond the barometric minima situated in the colder portion of the temperate zones, of which the great low-pressure area between Scotland and Iceland is an example. To suppose that the polar air-currents returned equatorwards in the upper atmosphere would be, surely, contrary to the known laws of thermodynamics.

On p. 204 Dr. Hann points out the decided inferiority of the winter resorts on the south and west coasts of England to those along the Mediterranean, where the mean temperature of the air is similar—an inferiority due to the damp, stormy, and relatively sunless character of the weather in our northern resorts. We might point out in this connection that meteorologists sometimes err in their estimation of climate through paying too exclusive a regard to the mere temperature of the air—an important climatic element, it is true, but only