

Personally, I desire frankly to say, that, as between staying at home at such a time in the cheerful society of my family and friends, and going to a distant city to endure the doubtful comforts of even the best hotel in the town, for the purpose of discussing the best method of combating the San Jose scale-bug, of collecting dinosaurs, or discovering the fossil fig-leaf aprons of Adam and Eve in the kitchen middens of Kilat-i-ghiljie, I will elect every time the former alternative, and I think I represent the sentiment of a very large number of gentlemen, who are honored by membership in the American Association for the Advancement of Science. We do not yield to any of our brethren in our devotion to science, but at the same time we have not yet come to that point where we are willing to sacrifice our known duty to our wives and children for the somewhat vague benefits of attendance upon meetings where at best we shall not learn much. I am told by one of the officers of the late meeting at St. Louis that very few persons were present at the meeting coming from a distance, except those who stood in some official relationship to the body, and who, therefore, felt compelled to be on hand. Those who were present, besides the official membership of the society, largely represented the local constituency. The reason for this is perfectly plain to my mind in view of what I have already stated. If the American Association insists upon meeting in the last week of the dying year the gatherings are likely to reveal moribundity as the years die in succession.

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CARNEGIE INSTITUTE,
PITTSBURGH, PA.,
February 25, 1904.

THE RAPPHIDES OF CALCIUM OXALATE.

TO THE EDITOR OF SCIENCE: In your issue of July 24, 1903, I gave a description of a phenomenon observed by Mr. B. J. Howard, of this bureau, showing the collection of the crystals of oxalate of lime in bomb-like cells in certain acid plants, such as the Indian turnip. I beg to call attention to the fact that Dr. H. A. Weber in the *Journal of the American Chemical Society*, Vol. 13, No.

7, published some interesting data regarding the cause of acidity in certain plants. As the conclusion of his experiments he stated: 'These experiments show conclusively that the acidity of the Indian turnip and calla is due to the raphides of calcium oxalate only.' Dr. Weber's explanation of the destruction of acidity in certain cases where calcium oxalate crystals are found is interesting. He ascribes it to the presence of a thick mucilage, or in cases where starch is present and where boiling destroys the acidity he ascribes this loss of acidity to the production of starch paste. The mucilage and the starch paste serve to restrain the activity of the crystals and prevent them from entering the surface of the tongue and mouth.

Mr. Howard has found that the colocasia leaf, which contains but little starch, retains its acidity when boiled until the acicular crystals are destroyed. The same observation applies to the Indian turnip, which contains a notable percentage of starch. It is probable therefore in all cases that the acidity continues as long as the needle-like crystals are intact. On recrystallization in these cases the lime oxalate assumes the octahedral form and the acidity is not restored. It is only in case the crystals are very fine and sharply pointed that acidity is pronounced. Large and more bluntly pointed crystals produce little or no effect.

Dr. Weber describes also the investigations of Professor W. R. Lazenby on the occurrence of crystals in plants, and states that Professor Lazenby is of the opinion that the acidity of the Indian turnip is due to the presence of the crystals of calcium oxalate. It seems only proper in this connection to call attention to these earlier observations which the experiments described in my letter of the above date fully confirm.

H. W. WILEY.

THE TERM 'BRADFORDIAN.'

TO THE EDITOR OF SCIENCE: On page 24 of the current volume of SCIENCE, January 1, 1904, Dr. G. H. Girty is reported as having proposed the term Bradfordinian for transition beds between Devonian and Carboniferous. It is not quite clear whether he intends the term