tags—that may be changed or taken away entirely without destroying the value or changing the nature of the thing. It is the thing itself that is important, not its name.

Sometimes the desire for innovations, when it can find no other changes to make, gives an old term a new meaning or substitutes a high-sounding word for a simple one. Occasionally these terms are poured fourth in such quantities that it looks as though their author had certainly invented a new science. Surely nothing can be more out of place than this cluttering up of scientific literature with verbiage that calls attention away from the subject under discussion.

Those who have done most for the spread of the knowledge of science have used the simplest language and, just so far as possible, have avoided technicalities. They have gone on the principle that what one has to say should be so said as to be understood by as many readers as possible, especially if the simplicity of the language makes clear rather than obscures the meaning.

It is earnestly to be hoped that the more sober-minded of our geologists, educational institutions and scientific societies will discourage the use of new terms when they are not absolutely necessary.

Since the above was written we have seen Dr. C. Hart Merriam's timely article in SCIENCE (May 7, 1897, p. 731) upon a 'useless and formidable,' 'disheartening and ever increasing mass of terminology.' We beg to commend it to geologists.

JOHN C. BRANNER.

STANFORD UNIVERSITY, CALIF., May 15, 1897.

CURRENT NOTES ON ANTHROPOLOGY.

SYSTEMATIC ANTHROPOLOGY.

SCHEMES, systems, plans, are of value in sciences as both indicating the directions in which investigations should be pursued and the convenient arrangements of ascertained facts. Like definitions of scientific terms, they are only provisional, suited to the present sum of knowledge, but are none the less useful for that.

In the last number of the 'Centralblatt für Anthropologie' (Heft. 2, 1897) the well-known writer, Dr. Emil Schmidt, of Leipzig, proposes the following comprehensive scheme:

Anthropology, the Study of the Human Species.

I. Natural Historical Treatment.
  A. Physical Anthropology.
    a. Man as a zoological species.
    b. The Races of Men.
      1. Descriptive treatment, Phylography.
      2. Investigation of physical principles, Phylology.
  B. Ethnic Anthropology.
    a. Descriptions of Peoples, Ethnography.
    b. Investigation of psychical principles, Ethnology.

II. Historical Anthropology or Prehistory; investigation of the earlier and lower stages of humanity.

The neologisms, phylology and phylography he introduces from Φῦλη, which he explains as the physical, while ἔθνος is the social and psychical group. His objections to previous schemes are also stated.

ABORIGINAL CULTIVATION OF MAIZE.

AGRICULTURE in primitive America is the more important as a cultural stage owing to the total absence of the pastoral life. Maize was usually the principal cultivated plant, and for that reason a study by Mr. Gardner P. Stickney on its use by the Wisconsin Indians (Parkman Club Publications, No. 13) merits especial attention. It is the result of close reading of the old authors and of local investigation. His conclusions are that the Wisconsin Indians raised it in large quantities, enough for their own wants, and an excess, which they used in trade; while even those tribes in the area of the State who dwelt so far north that it was an uncertain crop gave considable attention to it, and sometimes raised it in abundant fields. These tribes belonged

to the widespread Dakotan and Algonquian stocks, and thus we find the aborigines carrying the culture of this noted tropical plant up to the northernmost limits of its possible propagation.

THE GROOVED STONE AXE.

THE statement is occasionally made in lectures and articles on the American aboriginal stone industry that the grooved and polished axe, so common in our collections, is an artefact peculiar to our continent.

It is true that in its special shape it is rare in European collections. They have the grooved maul or pounder, but not often the polished axe with the groove running round near the butt and with a sharpened edge. A fine example, however, from southern Italy, is described and figured by Dr. Schoetensack in the 'Zeitschrift für Ethnologie' (Heft I., p. 9, 1897). That it was of local origin was proved by the kind of stone of which it was made. He refers to its similarity to American specimens, and quotes other instances where they have been found in the Old World. This is but another example where the artificial products of early man reveal striking similarities in all continents.

D. G. BRINTON.
UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA.

NOTES ON INORGANIC CHEMISTRY.

IN the last proceedings of the Chemical Society (London), A. E. Munby describes a Bunsen burner for acetylene which has proved very satisfactory in his hands. The tube is only five millimeters in diameter, or a slightly wider tube may be used, provided the mouth be curved inwards. With a larger opening there is a tendency for the flame to strike down. The gas jet is very small, delivering only one foot of acetylene per hour, under six inches of water pressure. The air holes must be large, and with sufficient air a non-luminous flame is given. The heating effect of the acetylene gas is large, and seems to be about twice that of coal gas. Mr. Munby suggests that the use of such a convenient source of heat should do much to stimulate research in country places, where, coal gas not being procurable, heretofore no good source of heat was available.

IN the same number Heycock and Neville, who have done so much to further our knowledge of alloys, describe the study of the sodium-gold alloys with the X-rays. Sodium is much more transparent to the rays than gold, and X-ray photographs of thin sections of the alloy show its crystalline structure very clearly. The authors point out that other alloys may be similarly studied, and are at present engaged of those of aluminum. It is possible that by this method our knowledge of alloys may be materially extended.

IN a graduating thesis at Washington and Lee University, Mr. J. R. K. Cowan takes up the question of the presence of tin in canned goods, and his results confirm those of previous investigators along this line. He finds tin present in every can examined, including tomatoes, peaches, apricots and sweet potatoes, in quantities of from 60 to 150 miligrams per kilo. Granting that this tin is present in a form which can be acted upon in the human system, and considering the large consumption of canned goods, it seems to follow that tin is less toxic than has been supposed and that it cannot be a cumulative poison. The maximum dose of tin is given as half a grain of chlorid, but the amount of tin corresponding to this might often be taken into the system during a single meal. Very few cases of supposed tin poisoning from eating canned goods have been reported, and it is probable there is little danger from this source. In no instance did Mr. Cowan detect the presence of lead.