

000; completion of armory, \$90,000; a boiler house, \$45,000; addition to the natural history building, \$65,000; ceramics building, \$65,000; addition to library and horticultural buildings, \$48,000; stock judging pavilion, \$30,000; for an extension of the present university campus and for an enlarged agricultural building, \$400,000 was voted.

M. PIERRE BOUTROUX has accepted a professorship of mathematics at Princeton University, and will assume his duties in the autumn. M. Boutroux is a son of the distinguished professor of philosophy, M. Emile Boutroux, and is closely related to the Poincaré family.

DR. R. E. MCCOTTER, instructor in anatomy in the University of Michigan, has been appointed professor of anatomy at Vanderbilt University.

MR. FREDERICK DUNLAP, assistant in the forest service, physicist at the Forest Plant Product Laboratory and lecturer in the University of Wisconsin, has been elected professor of forestry in the University of Missouri.

THE following appointments have been made at Northwestern University: Edward Leroy Schaub, Ph.D., of the University of Iowa, to be professor of philosophy; William H. Coghill, M.E., to be assistant professor of mining and metallurgy; William Logan Woodburn, Ph.D., to be assistant professor of botany; Elton J. Moulton, Ph.D., to be assistant professor of mathematics; Charles Ross Dines, Ph.D., to be instructor in mathematics; George Leroy Schnable, M.A., to be instructor in physics; Paul Mason Bachelder, M.A., to be instructor in mathematics; Harlan True Stetson, M.S., of Dartmouth, to be instructor in astronomy; Gilbert Haven Cady, M.S., of the University of Chicago, to be instructor in geology and mineralogy.

DISCUSSION AND CORRESPONDENCE

THE WORD "SELVA" IN GEOGRAPHIC LITERATURE

I WISH to enter a protest against the use of the Portuguese word "selva" as applied to the forests of the Amazon Valley in geo-

graphic literature. I am under the impression that the word was formerly used by several writers, but that it has been pretty generally dropped of late as unnecessary. This is written away from my library, however, and it is not possible to verify this statement at present.

In Mr. James Bryce's late book, "South America; Observations and Impressions, New York, 1913," the word "selva" is used as if it were not only the every-day and generally accepted name of certain and particular Brazilian forests, but as if it were so descriptive, so characteristic, and so appropriate that no English word could take its place.

I quote a few of Mr. Bryce's expressions:

The great Amazonian low forest-covered country—the so-called Selvas (woodlands) (p. 168). The great central plain of the Amazon and its tributaries which the Brazilians call the Selvas (woods) (p. 555). The Selvas or forest-covered Amazonian plain (p. 558).

I regret to have to say that I know of no reason whatever for such a use of the word *selva*. In the first place, it is not the word used in Brazil either for the Amazonian forest or for any other forest, Mr. Bryce to the contrary notwithstanding. It is true that it is a good Portuguese word, but it is not in common use, and during the forty years I have been acquainted with Portuguese language I doubt if I have heard it used by a Portuguese-speaking person more than two or three times, and then only in a poetic sense.

The Brazilians speak of the forests of the Amazon as *mattas*, just as they speak of the forests of any other part of the country. In 1907 Dr. H. von Ihering, director of the Museu Paulista in S. Paulo, Brazil, published a paper in Portuguese on the distribution of Brazilian forests. The occasion certainly seemed to offer an opportunity for saying something about the "selvas" and their peculiarities, but I do not find the word "selva" used once in the 53 pages of that article. The forests are there either designated by the special names used in the country, or they are called *mattas*, *mattos* or *florestas*, which are the words in common use all over Brazil.

Besides its use in Mr. Bryce's book, I find "selvas" mentioned in E. W. Heaton's "Scientific Geography; South America," London (1912), at pages 17, 39 and 55. Elsewhere in that book the author seems to get along quite comfortably without the word.

Selva is a Portuguese word like any other, but it is very little used and has no special application to the forests of the Amazon. The Brazilians do not distinguish the forests of the Amazon by any special word; they are called *mattas*, which is the word applied to any and all heavy forests alike.

J. C. BRANNER

RIO DE JANEIRO, BRAZIL,
June 6, 1913

DOES A LOW-PROTEIN DIET PRODUCE RACIAL INFERIORITY?

TO THE EDITOR OF SCIENCE: In your issue of June 13, 1913, is contained a communication by Dr. Edgar T. Wherry entitled: "Does a Low-protein Diet Produce Racial Inferiority?" The purpose of the article is to dispose of two objections that have been raised against such a dietary, by the application of the results of recent investigations. It seems to me that, in attempting the removal of the first objection, the article is open to some misconception, while, in the case of the second objection, the attempted disposal is far from being effective.

Dr. Wherry is presumably dealing with instances of recognized racial inferiority, and the inclusion of the Japanese people in this category, especially by an advocate of the low-protein theory, is a matter of some surprise. That the Japanese exhibit "some points of physical inferiority, or lack energy, aggressiveness, or courage," when compared with the European, for instance, on a protein-rich dietary, is hardly a generally recognized fact, nor is it in harmony with the contentions of Chittenden and others of his belief that in the Japanese we have an instance of a people "who for generations have apparently lived and thrived on a daily ration noticeably low in its content of proteid. . . ." Chittenden

utilizes this fact "as confirmatory evidence, on a large scale, of the perfect safety of lowering the consumption of proteid food to somewhere near the level of the physiological requirements of the body," and believes that "generations of low-proteid feeding, with the temperance and simplicity in dietary methods thereby implied, have certainly not stood in the way of phenomenal development and advancement when the gateway was opened for the ingress of modern ideas from western civilization."¹

The conceptions regarding the etiology of beri-beri have not undergone any radical change in the last year or two. The information that has been accumulated recently in regard to this disease has served to confirm and extend such conceptions, not to revolutionize them. For years it has been definitely known that the use of polished or husked rice is directly or indirectly involved in the causation of beri-beri. In proof of this statement I only need quote the extensive investigations of Fletcher² and of Fraser and Stanton,³ published six and four years ago, the results of which, obtained from large numbers of individuals, point unequivocally to an intimate relation between the consumption of polished rice and incidence to beri-beri. The comparatively recent discovery by several investigators of a constituent in rice-bran which cures the polyneuritis of beri-beri simply confirms the previous work above mentioned. Furthermore, this discovery does not at all militate against the contention that has often been raised that a diet containing a liberal and varied protein value is an effective preventive against beri-beri.

I doubt whether Dr. Wherry would find many dietitians, on either side of the argument, who consider the relation between the protein intake and the incidence to beri-beri one of the "supposedly most typical illustra-

¹"Nutrition of Man," pp. 222-223.

²William Fletcher, "Rice and Beri-Beri," *Lancet*, June 29, 1907.

³H. Fraser and A. T. Stanton, "An Enquiry Concerning the Etiology of Beri-Beri," *Lancet*, February 13, 1909.