however, that when a suitable season for the production of soft wheat occurs again, the crop will be quite as soft as in 1902.

A careful series of milling and baking tests of wheat from highly fertilized and exhausted soils (or soils on which wheat had been grown repeatedly) was made by me a few years ago. These results have not yet been published, but they prove, in so far as one series of tests can prove anything, that there is no essential difference in flour quality between samples of wheat raised under the two extreme conditions. I have not seen any trustworthy evidence whatever that wheat grown on poor soil (whether "exhausted" or "sick") is inferior for milling and baking purposes to that grown under more favorable conditions, except as regards plumpness, and even there I am not at all sure that the smaller crop from poor soils is as a rule distinctly less plump. I suspect that the lower yield, which is, of course, obtained, is due essentially to a smaller number of kernels rather than to imperfect development of them.

I hope that Professor Bolley will find time to give to the public some of the evidence on which his statements are based, especially the milling and baking tests, and some instances of "vital deterioration in quality of seed," due to manuring.

Chas. E. Saunders

Experimental Farm,
Ottawa, Canada,
October 8, 1913

"QUITE A FEW"

To the Editor of Science: The criticism of T. G. Dabney, in Science of September 5, of the phrase "quite a few," used by Professor Bolley in his paper in Science of July 11, is calculated to excite a surprise among his readers equal, probably, to that which Mr. Dabney himself feels towards Professor Bolley. But "quite a few" conveyed Professor Bolley's meaning perfectly, and, for myself, I can not think of a satisfactory equivalent that could have been substituted. *Quite a number* is a phrase sufficiently commonplace, probably—if it had been used—to have escaped Mr. Dabney's eagle eye, but is no more precise. What more can an essayist ask, and what can a reasonable critic object to, if a writing is so worded—albeit slightly colloquial—that its meaning is taken instantly?

If purists are to pounce on all our colloqualisms whenever they happen to be found isuing "from a learned teacher, in a scientific disquisition in a scientific journal" and articles are to be reduced to the cast-iron requirements of such critics, then the readers thereof will lose some valuable time. For it takes time to get the meaning of a thoroughgoing pedant. What should be said, for instance, of the phrase "pretty nearly," which is *pretty* common, I believe, among good writers? "Pretty" refers to the looks of a thing. Would anybody say that "pretty nearly" must be taken to mean *nearly pretty?* Then there is "Now then," a favorite phrase of lecturers introductory to the elucidation of some point just previously dated. If it means *now,* Mr. Dabney might say, it can not mean *then.* Take the word "scientist," which is admittedly a barbarism and one that has been fought against for forty years, yet sticks in the language like a burr, because of its usefulness—what are we going to do with that? Why, use it, of course, and snap our fingers at etymology and consistency, for it takes the place of three words and can not possibly be misunderstood.

The fact is, the English language defies argument. Vagrant words, phrases and sentences, illogical and intolerable at first, are every now and then creeping into usage and refusing to be turned out. In the beginning they may excite loathing, then they are simply frowned on and avoided whenever possible—though often through considerable circumlocution—but in the end they become "good English." And the chances are that some day we are astonished to find some of them in Shakespeare—like "a bum bailiff," for example, which he who looks for will find there.

The meaning to be conveyed is the desideratum above everything else. That may be developed with much labor, in sentences always capable of parsing and always logical, or the writer may show a little more elasticity

of style and be just as well, if not better, understood. He will also be more agreeable to "quite a few" of SCIENCE's readers I have no doubt, among whom is

HENRY K. WHITE

CATONSVILLE, MARYLAND,
September 25, 1913

SCIENTIFIC BOOKS

A Biological Survey of the Waters of Woods Hole and Vicinity. Section I., Physical and Zoological, by FRANCIS B. SUMNER, RAYMOND C. OSBURN and LEON J. COLE. Section II., Botanical, by BRADLEY M. DAVIS. Section III., A Catalogue of the Marine Fauna, by FRANCIS B. SUMNER, RAYMOND C. OSBURN and LEON J. COLE. Section IV., A Catalogue of the Marine Flora, by BRADLEY M. DAVIS. Department of Commerce and Labor. Bulletin of the Bureau of Fisheries, Vol. XXXI., 1911. Washington, Government Printing Office. 1913.

This bulletin is issued in two parts, each a separate volume; Part I., 544 pages, of which 54 contain introductory explanations and physical data, the remainder giving the results of the dredging operations carried on by the bureau, supplemented by some observations on conditions in shallower water, where dredging was not necessary. In this part 274 charts and maps are included. The second part contains 316 pages, numbered continuously with the first part. It consists of catalogues of the marine animals and plants, with localities, etc., bibliographies of works referring to the region in question, and ends with what appears to be a complete index. The present notes refer to the botanical parts, which occupy 147 pages, as against 620 pages for the zoological; but some reference is necessary to the introductory part.

The region under consideration includes Vineyard Sound and Buzzards Bay; the main body of the information on which this work is based was obtained by dredgings in the years 1903, 1904 and 1905, and a few in 1907, from the government steamers, *Fish Hawk, Phalarope* and *Blue Wing.* In all 458 stations were dredged, of which a list is given, showing date, location, depth and character of bottom. Charts 225 to 227 also show these data graphically. At each station a record was kept of the species brought up by the dredge, so that the data as to distribution may be considered as fairly complete. The result of this, as regards 38 species of algæ, is shown on charts, identical outline charts of the region, one for each species, with a star showing each station where the species was found. No verbal description can express as clearly as do these charts the area inhabited by a species, and their value is especially shown when one compares the eight similar charts in the zoological section, showing, not distribution of species, but temperature, density, etc. Compare, for instance, chart 228, *Chætomorpha melagonium,* a northern plant, occurring here only in the colder waters by Gay Head and Cuttyhunk; chart 237, *Laminaria digitata,* also northern, about Gay Head only; chart 241, *Griffithsia Bornetiana,* almost entirely in the warmer waters near shore; chart 242, *Griffithsia tenuis,* a common plant of the Mediterranean and Bermuda, here reaching its northern limit, and here recorded only in the extreme northern portion of the chart, where shallow water and distance from the open sea give a higher temperature than in the more southern part of the bay or in the sound.[1]

With these chart 261, *Grinnellia americana,* is in strong contrast, showing an almost universal distribution for this beautiful and characteristically American species.

The dredgings on which the charts were based were all made in the months of July, August and September; that different results would have been obtained by dredgings in other months is quite possible, especially as regards annuals, but probably the difference would be less than what is found between tide marks, or just below low-water mark; at such

[1] *G. tenuis* also occurs just east of the region represented in the charts, but only in such bodies of water as Waquoit Bay, which are very shallow, connected with the sea by a narrow channel, and in which in summer the temperature of the water is quite high.