

reader, the context usually reveals the true meaning. This seems to be less often true in the case of "strata" (used less frequently, but with at least as high a percentage of error). The same desire for new expressions fills our reading matter with such words as "résumé" (for which "summary" is usually better) and "rôle," printed (newspaper style) without accents.

Strangely enough, many a worker who conducts his investigations with the strictest accuracy of which science is capable, publishes his results with little concern for accuracy of statement or nomenclature. Unfortunately, some of the errors escape the attention of even the most vigilant editor. A flagrant error which seems to be gaining ground is the expression "different than." Only two weeks ago it occurred in the *Saturday Evening Post*—one of our most carefully edited journals.

E. H. McCLELLAND

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#### ASSIMILATION OF FIXED NITROGEN BY HAVANA TOBACCO

EXPERIMENTS on the assimilation of different forms of combined nitrogen by Havana tobacco are being made at the Massachusetts Agricultural Experiment Station. Among results to date is the proof of ready assimilation of ureal nitrogen in the unchanged form. Plant growth, however, has not been as rapid with urea as a source of nitrogen as with sodium or calcium nitrate.

A more detailed report of the whole experiment will be made later. On account of the growing importance of urea as a commercial fertilizer, we make this progress report.

A. B. BEAUMONT  
G. J. LARSINOS

#### STANDARD MATHEMATICAL SYMBOLS

A LIST of proposed American standard mathematical symbols has been prepared by a special committee of the American Engineering Standards Committee and the list has been submitted to the sponsor organizations. This list was noted in *SCIENCE* for August 12, 1927. It has been published in full in the following places: *Jour. Engin. Educ.*, June, 1927; *Jour. Soc. Auto. Engin.*, July, 1927; *Mechanical Engineering*, August, 1927. Since the American Association for the Advancement of Science is one of the sponsor organizations for this standardization project, the permanent secretary wishes to bring this matter to the attention of all members interested, with the request that they examine the list and send him their comments as soon as possible. The comments received will be

placed before the executive committee of the association, which is asked officially to approve the list of proposed standard symbols.

BURTON E. LIVINGSTON,  
*Permanent Secretary*

#### QUOTATIONS

##### A PORTRAIT PAINTER OF BIRDS

THE birds have lost their most devoted and faithful portrait painter in the tragic and untimely death of Louis Agassiz Fuertes. For he was not only a great ornithologist. He was for the birds what such an artist as Sargent was for men. There are not a few artists who have represented with more or less accuracy the color, form and pose of birds, but the portraits painted by Fuertes, who had a genius for individualizing every bird he saw even in its facial expression and in depicting what he saw with practiced vision that was as a sensitized plate, also revealed the character of the living creature. All birds of a feather look alike to the ordinary observer, but every owl and toucan painted by Fuertes, as Frank M. Chapman said in writing of him many years ago, had its individuality, was instinct with life, and differed from the drawings of the inexperienced or unsympathetic artist as a living bird from a stuffed one.

Dr. Fuertes's opportunities for field study were greater than those of any other painter of birds, from the boreal birds of the Bering Sea to the flamingoes of the warmer regions. He studied the birds of Texas, California, Nevada, Jamaica, the Gulf of St. Lawrence, the Bahamas, Florida, Saskatchewan, Alberta, Yucatan, Mexico, Colombia and Abyssinia. He made thousands of drawings, many of which have been widely reproduced and have been of the greatest value in interesting the public, children especially, in bird life, and acquainting them with the characteristics, the habits and the migrations of birds and their relation to human life.

But the contribution that will be his permanent monument in this state is his collection of portraits of the birds of New York (made for the illustration of Eaton's great work on the "Birds of New York"), which was purchased by Mrs. Russell Sage and presented to the State Museum at Albany. The birds will come and go with the seasons through the years all unwitting of his absence, but they can not become wholly extinct, for they will be preserved there as in life. He whose skill has given them this sort of immortality, in season and out, needs "no trophy, sword or hatchment o'er his bones," for they in turn will preserve the memory of his genius and of his devotion to them.—*The New York Times*.