versity of Nebraska, will return to China in the autumn as professor of biochemistry at the Yenching University at Peking.

PROFESSOR J. E. HAWLEY, of the University of Wisconsin, has been appointed head of the department of mineralogy at Queens University. He is a graduate of Queens and succeeds Professor E. L. Bruce, who takes the Miller Memorial Research Chair in Geology.

DISCUSSION

AMBITIOUS AGRONOMY

ORGANIZATION is the slogan of to-day; mass production is typically American. Surely no carping critic could do less than admit that the American Society of Agronomy is achieving its full 100 per cent. of United States modernism. Not content with sloughing off even the suspicion of representing an art rather than a science or with establishing an excellent scientific journal or with the enrolment of a large and enthusiastic membership, the agronomists now seem ready to assume control of the evolution of our mother tongue.

When a committee comprising a university president, a university professor and a head of a large office of a large government bureau issues pronouncements designed to bring about extensive changes in the English language, and the American Society of Agronomy accepts these reports and indorses them, at least by implication, by continuing this committee on agronomic terminology, the question now may be: Is it necessary to organize a Society Opposed to the American Society of Agronomy or will ridicule erase the effects of such well-intentioned blundering?

A year ago the first detailed part of the committee report[1] set forth a motley crew of adjectives, "median terms"—illogical, carelessly constructed, poorly if at all defined, confusing rather than an aid to concise scientific expression, and generally undesirable.[2] A few samples are quoted from the lists in the report:

midlow	midplumpth
midheight	midlux
midhigh	midumblux
midthickth	midrugaplane
midstraighth	midceptisist
midcoolth	midceptimmune
midgoodth	midstouth

Rather especial attention should be given to *stouth*, the proposed basic term from which the word "midstouth" was made. In answering a criticism to the effect that *stouth* was a word with a meaning entirely different from that proposed by the committee, the chairman of the committee has stated:[3] "As the committee pointed out . . . 'stouth' is not a new word but an old term having exactly the meaning of stoutness." Perhaps the committee can submit more definite evidence regarding the connotation of these two words than a dogmatic statement from its chairman. Our leading dictionaries, such as Century, Webster's International, and Standard, however, have failed to discover the common use of *stouth* meaning stoutness. The words *stout* and *stouth* are derived from quite different sources, and at least from the beginning of the fourteenth century to the present time even the derived meanings in "common use" have never been interchangeable. Throughout this period *stouth* has carried the idea of theft, stealth, etc., but never stoutness; *stout* has meant proud, valiant, hardy, thick in body, etc., but even with the variant spellings up to the present time it seems never to have been confused with *stouth*. The second part of the last year's report[4] urges mass action in simplification and standardization of plural forms of Latin words with the plea of greater efficiency in instruction of the young.

Of course no attention would need be given to these reports were they fathered merely by an individual. They become important solely because the American Society of Agronomy seems impressed by its impressive committee. Probably no group of technical men in the United States is publishing more per man year than the agronomists. These agronomically standardized evolutions will soon, therefore, be firmly intrenched in the respectability of "dictionary usage" unless agronomists as well as others can be stimulated to thoughtful review of language building in general and in particular of the character of the recommendations or the creations of the committee. For example, in the second report two new words, "phytoleum" and "zooleum," are suggested. Although the report seems to state that these words were constructed to be "similar" to the trade names *congoleum* and *linoleum*, it may be assumed the committee in-

[1] Carleton R. Ball, Homer L. Shantz and Charles F. Shaw, "Median Terms in Adjectives of Comparison," *Journal of the American Society of Agronomy*, 20: 182–191. 1928.

[2] K. F. Kellerman, "Criticism of the Report of the Committee on Agronomic Terminology," *Journal of the American Society of Agronomy*, 20: 519–522. 1928.
J. H. Kempton, "Agronomic Jabberwocky," SCIENCE, 67: 629–630. 1928.
H. A. Allard, "Words and Life," SCIENCE, 69: 41–43. 1929.

[3] Carleton R. Ball, "Comment on Dr. Kellerman's Criticism of the Committee Report on 'Median Terms,'" *Journal of the American Society of Agronomy*, 20: 523–526. 1928.

[4] Carleton R. Ball, "English or Latin Plurals for Anglicized Nouns" (A contribution from the Committee on Agronomic Terminology), *American Speech*, 3: 291–325. 1928.

tended to express the hope that these two, together with the well-known word *petroleum,* might establish domination over the oleaginous world. I suggest that *petroleum* is a Latin derivative, whereas the two new proposals are Greek-Latin hybrids that I believe scholars will advise American authors to avoid.

Lack of linguistic background is also indicated by such curiosities as the failures to realize that *rex* is the phonetic result of *reg+s*; and *lex,* of *leg+s* ("Exceptions . . . are such words as *lex* and *rex* . . . of which the plurals . . . end in *-ges.* . . . Attention has already been called . . . to the irregular formation of the plurals of . . . *lex* . . . *rex* . . ."); or that, while *mater* and *mother* are cognate, *mothers* was not derived from *matres* but is strictly English and quite unsuitable to offer as an "Anglicized plural" of *mater.* No clues to the best method of writing a plural of *alma mater* have been discovered in the report.

To add a lighter touch, I can not forego noting the naïve pun in the suggestion of simplification for *facies, series,* and *species,* ". . . the desirable action in the case of these nouns is to change, not the plural, but the singular, by dropping the final *s* and thereby creating a form truly singular in appearance."

As noted before, the committee appears to be permanent and to carry a certain indirect indorsement from the society even for its unpublished and unfinished ideas. In the January, 1929, issue of the *Journal of the American Society of Agronomy* is printed a short report[5] as a keynote of an eventual more complete statement happily not yet in evidence. This brief recent report is perhaps the most startling of the three. The committee now seems to be specializing in infinitives and past tenses, for example:

> The past tense of many hundreds of similar verbs has only the one meaning of indicating the possession of the article or quality named.
>
> That this is the common usage is indicated in several other ways than by the use of the past tense. . . .
>
> In contrast to the many hundreds of words in which the infinitive or the past tense indicates the possession of the article or quality named in the root. . . .

I doubt whether any intelligent reader of the report can avoid concluding that the committee has confused the past tense and the past participle. If the committee had experimented with irregular verbs with their differences in form for past tense and past participle, concentration upon past tenses might not have received such wide publicity.

[5] Carleton R. Ball, *chairman,* Homer L. Shantz and Charles F. Shaw, "Report of Committee on Terminology" (report presented at the annual meeting of the society held in Washington, D. C., on November 22, 1928).

The word *dehulled* is featured. I admit regretfully that our own bureau is partly if not entirely to blame. About ten years ago the bureau began to use *dehulled* to avoid the confusion that was claimed to arise when varieties of barley with and without hulls were discussed. In subsequent years the use of *dehulled* has been extended somewhat, without much further thought or discussion. With a bureau publishing as largely as ours, and with close contacts with many state agricultural colleges, it is easy to see how not only papers dealing with barley but also those dealing with other cereals should soon bristle with the prefix *de-,* and the adjective *hulled* should sometimes mean with hulls on, and at other times should mean with hulls removed.

Elsewhere[6] I have suggested the use of the nounal adjective *hull* in place of the participial adjective *hulled* in describing barley that retains the hulls. For example, there is no objection to having black-*hull* barley hulled, though it does seem foolish to have black-*hulled* barley hulled. Omitting the adjective *black* makes the contrast even better. Hull barleys, then, will not be confused with hull-less barleys. Whether or not this simple suggestion for solving the problem of the agronomist's *de* will be "recognized by the dictionaries," I prefer to leave to the dictates of good usage, guided if possible by the advice of specialists in philology rather than in agronomy.

That it is often desirable to add new words or to make other changes in a language is beside the question. All writers favor coining new words when they are needed, or otherwise aiding in language growth. The requisites of conciseness, clearness and exactness of definition, and suitability and propriety of words or plans should be uppermost, however, in the minds of any language amateurs. No one scientific or technical group, furthermore, should try to change our language except to the extent essential for accuracy, brevity and facility of expression of the technicalities peculiar to that group.

In all probability the American Society of Agronomy has been acting carelessly or thoughtlessly under the pressure of its enthusiastic committee on agronomic terminology. Whether this brief outline of some of the unfortunate features of the committee point of view will lead to more sober second thoughts only time can tell.

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THE EUROPEAN STARLING IN ILLINOIS

THE European starling was introduced into the United States about 1890, and since that time has spread rapidly westward until its western limits are

[6] K. F. Kellerman, "'Hulled' and 'Dehulled,'" *American Speech,* 4: 186. 1929.