

CHOMATOLOGY, SOIL SCIENCE

As one brought up in Greece and educated there as far as the baccalaureate degree, I have been especially interested in the recent discussion of the term "pedology" as applied to soil science. The contributions of Shaw,¹ Weir² and Peter³ have shown quite adequately the ambiguity which now exists in the meaning of this term. If it were the most appropriate and precise term, there might be a reason for making some special effort to get it away from medicine and establish its use to designate soil science. As a matter of fact it does not really convey the meaning of soil science as that term is now used.

Whatever might be said in defense of a very general term to embrace the study of soils with no reference to their fundamental significance in plant life, the fact remains that the soil scientists are primarily those interested in plant relations, especially in agriculture. To be sure, the geologist has some interest in soil as the final degradation product of rocks, or as the progenitor of sediments. The engineer is concerned with earth as the material of embankments, dams, excavations and the like. But when we speak of soil science we but rarely and incidentally have these matters in mind. Soil science is a much more precise term than that and means the

science of the soil as it relates to organisms living therein, and predominantly as it concerns agriculture. It would seem wholly desirable that any term with the λόγος ending should convey this precise shade of meaning.

Pedology, agrology and humology are all terms which do not describe what we have in mind when we say soil science. "Εδαφος, the root for the suggested edaphology, is a collective term for ground including soil, and edaphology is fairly appropriate. Choology might serve, since its root word χοῦς means earth or soil. It is the word used in that passage in Genesis descriptive of the creation of man to denote the substance from which man was made; the King James's version translates this word as dust. The most appropriate Greek word is χῶμα, genitive χώματος. Both in classical and modern Greek this word signifies soil as the botanist and agriculturist use the term. Chomatology, therefore, is the most significant term we could adopt.

It has the advantages of being free from any entanglements and ambiguity, easy to pronounce and precise in its meaning.

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SPECIAL CORRESPONDENCE

NOTES FROM THE NATIONAL MUSEUM
OF CANADA

DR. R. M. ANDERSON, chief of division of biology, has received notification of his election as an honorary member of the Ornithological Society of Dresden.

Dr. M. O. Malte, chief botanist, National Herbarium, will attend the International Botanical Congress at London, in July, 1930, and also visit botanical institutions and friends in Sweden, Denmark and other countries.

Mr. P. A. Taverner, ornithologist, left the middle of May for the terminus of the Hudson Bay Railway, at Churchill, Manitoba, and will spend the summer in ornithological work on the west side of Hudson Bay with two assistants.

Dr. Morten P. Porsild, director of the Danish Arctic Station at Godhavn, Disko, Greenland, for many years, is spending several months in Ottawa, assisting in the determination of 15,000 to 20,000

sheets of botanical specimens collected by his sons, A. E. and R. T. Porsild, while on reindeer investigations for the Northwest Territories and Yukon Branch, Department of the Interior, Ottawa, in Alaska and Mackenzie district, Canada, in 1925-28, and by A. E. Porsild in James Bay and Hudson Bay in 1929. The specimens will be retained in the National Herbarium. Dr. Porsild will return to Godhavn on the S. S. *Beothic*, which will visit the Eastern Arctic on its annual patrol, sailing from North Sydney, N. S., late in July.

Mr. Hamilton M. Laing, of Comox, and Mr. Ian McTaggart-Cowan, of North Vancouver, B. C., collected small mammals and birds in the Tobacco Plains region of southeastern British Columbia in April and May for the museum. Mr. Laing began work as park naturalist in National Parks of Canada on June 1, and will be stationed at Jasper Park and Rocky Mountains Park at Banff, Alberta, for the remainder of the season. Mr. McTaggart-Cowan will continue work for the National Museum of Canada until September 30.

Mr. J. Dewey Soper, of Ottawa, who spent 1924-26 as naturalist for the museum in the Cumberland

¹ Chas. F. Shaw, Is "Pedology" Soil Science? *Jour. Amer. Soc. Agron.*, 22: 235-238, 1930.

² W. W. Weir, "Soil Science," *SCIENCE*, 71: 218, 1930.

³ A. M. Peter, "Soil Science," *SCIENCE*, 71: 218, 1930.