

scientific usage; and the loose application of the term to ordinary ferruginous clays, iron ores, etc., is wholly unwarranted.

From a scientific standpoint, Mr. Scrivenor's suggestion that the term bauxite should be applied to laterite in the sense here defined is not justifiable. Bauxite is a mineral name, signifying a hydrated alumina of fairly definite composition. Laterite is properly a rock name, signifying the product of a special kind of weathering; it is a complex product, essentially characterized by the presence of free hydrated alumina, but usually containing also notable amounts of titanium and iron oxides, whilst free silica is generally present, and hydrated silicate of aluminium is not necessarily absent. The amount of iron oxide is very variable; but when it becomes excessive it usually separates out in the form of concretionary iron ore. In defining the word laterite, however, Buchanan, as we have already seen, clearly distinguished such iron ore from the laterite in which it occurred; and in no case did he apply the term to material resembling that referred to by Mr. Scrivenor as "masses of iron ore".

The term laterite is used in a loose way not merely for material which is essentially iron ore and which should be described as such; it is also used by some people as a name for any ferruginous clay, sand, or gravel which may occur at or near the surface in tropical and subtropical countries. Such uses of the term are unscientific, and cannot properly be adopted by geologists, any more than they can adopt the engineers' use of the term granite to cover all holocrystalline igneous rocks, including syenite, diorite, and gabbro.

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"AN EGYPTIAN OASIS."

SIR,—In your review of this work (p. 477) you call special attention to Mr. Beadnell's suggestion, that a lake in the Kharga district may have been due to the letting loose of artesian waters through denudation of the once overlying impervious beds. This interested me much, as I had attributed to the same cause the formation of swallow-holes and valleys. (See "Ightham", Homeland Association, 1907, pp. 127–30, and also more fully in *Geographical Journal*, September, 1908.) It is, therefore, gratifying to have my views independently confirmed by one who has had such intimate experience of flowing artesian wells as Mr. Beadnell.¹

I may say that before my views were published I put them forth in correspondence with some leading geologists, and they were strongly contested by some and not really accepted by any. Those who attended the Loose Valley Excursion this year of the Geologists' Association in July saw an area near Maidstone where, as I consider, this suggested method of valley formation is particularly well shown.

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WEST MALLING.
October 7, 1909.

¹ See also Capt. H. G. Lyons, *Quart. Journ. Geol. Soc.*, 1894, vol. 1, p. 541.