

anyone the right to insist on their presence being considered the leading characteristic of a product whose name indicates its resemblance to bricks.

That the letters I have written may not be said to be wholly critical, may I add that I have lately examined a number of Malayan rocks with a view to determining the presence or otherwise of free aluminium hydroxides, and have not yet failed to obtain a positive result; but the work has been preliminary only, and I am not prepared to make definite statements as to the quantities present or the degree of hydration. A weathered granitic rock gave over 10 per cent. of alumina. A mass of kaolin afforded about 2 per cent. alumina. All the Malayan 'laterites' that I have examined yield a small quantity. The Malacca laterite, which is the only laterite in the Peninsula that I know of agreeing strictly with Buchanan's definition, contains these hydroxides also. A grey clay-slate taken from the top of a pass far from granite outcrops and associated with quartzite yielded a precipitate of aluminium hydroxide equivalent to about .05 per cent. of alumina.

I do not think for a moment that I am alone in supposing that the production of free aluminium hydroxides is widespread in the tropics, or that it is not confined to laterite in its widest sense; but what would be of great interest is a comparison along these lines of rocks in tropical and temperate regions, for it is hard to believe that the amount of hydroxides found in the tropics is other than a development of a process regulated by temperature, moisture, and perhaps vegetation, and that they are not being produced in smaller quantities in temperate climes also.

J. B. SCRIVENOR.

BATU GAJAH,
FEDERATED MALAY STATES.
May 7, 1910.

OBITUARY.

ROBERT PARR WHITFIELD.

BORN MAY 27, 1828.

DIED APRIL 6, 1910.

R. P. WHITFIELD, who was born in New Hartford, New York, had for fifty-four years been engaged in geological and palæontological work. He was one of James Hall's assistants in the first State geological survey of Iowa, from 1856 to 1876; and he then became palæontologist to Professor T. C. Chamberlin's State survey of Wisconsin. He laboured also for Clarence King in the Geological Survey of the Fortieth Parallel, contributing to the Palæontological Reports published in 1877. His researches were mainly on the fossils of the Palæozoic formations, and he dealt with all groups of Invertebrata. From 1872 to 1878 he was Professor of Geology at the Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, Troy, N.Y., and since 1877 he had been Curator of the Geological Department in the American Museum of Natural History.¹

¹ For most of the above particulars we are indebted to Mr. G. P. Merrill's *Contributions to the History of American Geology*, 1906.