

to which allusion has already been made, trees and bushes are being raised for distribution amongst the Duke's tenantry. We are pleased, however, to find that these practical steps for the promotion of fructiculture do not originate in any extravagant notions of the all-saving powers of fruit-growing to remedy the present agricultural distress. Much harm has been done in this country by the special pleading of those who are faddists on the subject, and who advocate their fad by holding up to view all the notable cases of success, and all the possible advantages to be gained, while they keep in the background all the difficulties and dangers, minimise the costs of planting, and hide the numerous cases of failure. No one can question the fact that fruit-growing in England is a profitable occupation when properly conducted under favourable conditions of soil, climate, and distance from market; nor can it be doubted that a certain proportion (perhaps 5 or 10 per cent.) of those who are now ordinary farmers could become fruit farmers with great advantage to themselves, and it must also be admitted that the distribution of some knowledge of fruit-growing over the country generally would render the thousands of orchards attached to homesteads a source of small, or often substantial, profit to the holders, instead of being, as they are at present, a mere waste of land and money; but to imagine that every farmer can become a fruit grower is as absurd as imagining that every farmer could become a horse breeder. Even if such a metamorphosis were possible it would be suicidal; yet it should be pointed out that the fruit market in England is an exceptionally expansive one, and that prices of hard fruits would probably be but little affected even if the supply were doubled; the rapidly increasing importation of apples, which has now reached 5,000,000 bushels a year, has had no effect whatever on the market price of the fruit. These might have been grown in England just as well as abroad, for with a proper selection of varieties England need never fear a competition with foreign-grown apples.

It is certainly a fallacy to suppose that it is only in a few exceptionally favoured districts that fruit can be profitably grown: the appearance of the trees and the abundant crop of strawberries at the Woburn Experimental Fruit Farm are sufficient to demonstrate that a field of ordinary arable land of average fertility, with nothing to recommend it for fruit-growing beyond having a gentle slope to the south-west, and with a reputation amongst farmers of being the most unmanageable in the district, may be rendered highly suited for the production of fruit. To produce such results, however, right methods of procedure are, of course, essential, and nothing could be more striking than the difference between the bulk of the apple-trees at the farm, and those growing on two plots where the planting and subsequent treatment were such as is usually adopted by farmers: the ground where these trees were had, indeed, been properly trenched and cleaned once, but the trees had been carelessly planted, the branches had not been cut back, and the weeds had been subsequently allowed to grow; the result was that along the branches there were only a few half-dead leaves of not more than one-fifth of the proper size, and it would have required a trained horticulturist to have recognised that these trees were of the same variety as those which had been properly tended.

Visitors were also much struck by the evidence which the results at the farm afforded of the hardness of English fruit trees. No season could have been more trying for recently-planted trees than that just experienced. A very wet autumn, during which the heavy soil of the farm was unworkable, was followed by a winter of almost unprecedented severity, and this, in its turn, by a still more trying period of drought. Yet, with the exception of the young stocks and a few strawberry plants, the mortality amongst the thousands of trees and bushes

brought on to the ground in the autumn, was confined to about six individuals and half of these were killed through the improper method purposely adopted in planting them.

All readers of NATURE will wish success to an enterprise so well begun and so liberally conducted, which is clearly destined to afford results of high economic and scientific value.

THE REVISION OF THE "BRITISH PHARMACOPŒIA."

THE last edition of the "British Pharmacopœia" was issued in 1885, and though a thin volume of "Additions" was published by the General Medical Council in 1890, the progress of science and the requirements of medical practice have rendered necessary a complete revision of the official handbook. The work has accordingly been entrusted to a Committee of the Council, consisting of Sir Richard Quain, F.R.S., Chairman, the only remaining member of the Committee of 1885; Sir Dyce Duckworth and Mr. Carter, of London; Dr. Leech, of Manchester; Dr. Batty Tuke, of Edinburgh; Dr. Donald MacAlister, of Cambridge; Dr. McVail, of Glasgow; and Dr. Athill and Dr. Moore, of Dublin. Dr. Nestor Tirard, of King's College, London, has been appointed secretary to the Committee, and Prof. Attfield, F.R.S., of the Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain, general editor. On questions of chemistry, Dr. T. E. Thorpe, F.R.S., Principal of the Government Laboratory at Somerset House, with Prof. Emerson Reynolds, F.R.S., of Dublin, and Prof. Tilden, F.R.S., of the Royal College of Science, have been invited to act as scientific referees. Mr. W. T. Thiselton-Dyer, F.R.S., Director of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, and Mr. Holmes, Curator of the Pharmaceutical Society's Museum, have received a similar invitation as regards botanical questions. The rapid growth of experimental pharmacology has, moreover, rendered it desirable to enlist expert assistance in regard to the physiological properties and actions of new remedies, and accordingly difficult questions of this nature will be referred to Dr. Lauder Brunton, of London, Prof. Fraser, of Edinburgh, and Prof. W. G. Smith, of Dublin. Lastly, on matters of pharmacy, the Pharmaceutical Society have been asked to give their valuable aid, and have promptly formed a strong committee of practical experts. To this committee many questions as to the compounding and preparation of drugs will doubtless have to be referred.

A circular inviting suggestions for the improvement of the "Pharmacopœia" has been addressed to the several universities and medical licensing corporations of the United Kingdom, and from the majority of these careful and elaborate replies have been received. They contain numerous proposals for the omission of doubtful or obsolete preparations, for the incorporation of new drugs that have come into practical use since 1885, and for the simplification and correction of the text in general.

In response to requests transmitted through the Privy Council to the medical authorities of the colonies and India, a very large body of materials, submitted with the object of adapting the "Pharmacopœia" to the requirements of the empire at large, have reached the editing committee. These open up a multitude of somewhat difficult questions; for though the "Pharmacopœia" is by law recognised as the official standard of reference at home, it has not the same legal sanction outside the British Isles. While therefore it is possible that something may be done as regards the recognition of important natural drugs used in Indian or colonial practice, it is highly probable that these may have to be relegated to a special appendix. The desire to go as far as may legally be practicable in making the "Pharmacopœia" an im-

perial one is, however, highly laudable, and should be encouraged with a view to the unification of British medical science. It is further announced that a long-deferred step is about to be taken by the introduction of the metric system into the body of the work. In the present edition the centimetres and grammes of science appear modestly in the supplementary pages dealing with volumetric processes, and then only as an alternative to grains and "grain-measures." We understand that in the new revision centimetres and grammes will be made official in all the monographs of the text, side by side with the still legalised grains and ounces, minims and drachms. This change will bring the British handbook into line with the official dispensaries of all other civilised States, and should tend to hasten the time when the international system of metric weights and measures shall acquire full legal authority in this country.

It thus appears that the Medical Council's Committee have undertaken the task of revision with an adequate sense of their responsibility. They have in the suggestions of the medical authorities at home and abroad, and in the useful digests of the literature of pharmacy, prepared from year to year by their reporter, Prof. Atfield, ample materials whereon to base their deliberations. As a body of physicians representing the supreme council of the profession, they are eminently qualified to judge as to the requirements of practical medicine and clinical therapeutics. Where their domain borders on that of the specialist in chemistry, botany, pharmacy, or physiological pharmacology, they propose to have recourse to the most skilled representatives of these branches of science. The result of their labours, thus conceived and carried out, will be awaited with interest not only by practitioners of medicine and pharmacy, and by manufacturing chemists, but by all who have sympathy with the application of science to human needs.

THE FIRST MERIDIAN.

AT the recent Geographical Congress in London, the question of the first meridian was discussed with particular interest.

It was proposed that the first meridian should not be established officially, but should merely be settled with a view to producing an international map to the scale of millionths. M. A. de Lapparent has written an article in *La Nature* on the subject, of which the following is an analysis; it is a noteworthy occurrence that a Frenchman should have taken up the subject with such interest, for the French has hitherto been the only nation to reject the Greenwich meridian. In the preliminary discussions they have brought upon themselves many reproaches for hindering a scientific work the use of which every one had recognised, while they themselves had no principle to bring forward to support their objections. The matter has been much discussed amongst them, and at the Geographical Society of Paris, by a special commission, it was decided that the map should be accepted. It was considered best that France should not be the only country to refuse the project; nevertheless, it was decided to insist on the metric system being used, for here a principle was involved.

On this subject M. de Lapparent writes as follows:—

"Thus, true to its habit of fighting for its views, France has again showed itself champion of the metric system, offering to make, for the scientific and rational interest, a sacrifice of national self-love. It would be impossible for it to capitulate on the question of the system, for here a principle is concerned; but the choice of a meridian, depending on no logical consideration, could be more easily granted. Evidently the proposed map, if ever produced was to be arranged so as to be a help to already existing maps, the latter being in great majority on the

meridian of Greenwich; by wishing to impose the meridian of Paris (which would not have been a success), it would have caused greater trouble than the contrary case. Henry IV. estimated that Paris was worth a mass; the French delegates, however, said on their side that the concession of a meridian, for a special and determined work, was quite worth the agreement which was expected to be established in view of the adoption, for the same purpose, of the metric system."

Many of our own countrymen have regretted that the public spirit prevented the system being used officially in Britain.

However, the acceptance of the Greenwich meridian well deserved a recompense, and the vote was unanimously carried that the metric system should be used for the map.

It is worth observing that the subject was discussed with remarkably few disagreements, considering that the congress was international. This seems to show that the time is fast approaching when national prejudices will be done away with if they support illogical theories; if principles are involved, it is right they should be adhered to, but they should not be allowed to hinder an enterprise profitable, perhaps, to all humanity.

NOTES.

THE *Times* of yesterday published a telegram, dated September 17, from Sandefjord, Norway, received through Reuter's Agency, stating that advices received at Sandefjord from the Danish trading station of Angmagsalik, on the east coast of Greenland, state that towards the end of July a three-masted ship, with a short foremast, was seen by Eskimos on two occasions firmly embedded in drift ice. On the first occasion the ship was observed off Sermiligak, 65° 45' lat. N., 36° 15' long. W.; and the second time off Sermelik, 65° 20' lat. N., 38° long. W. It is believed that the vessel was Dr. Nansen's *Fram*, and that she was on her return journey. In any case, however, no positive news of the exploring vessel is expected to arrive until next year.

ON Wednesday, Sept. 11, a Reuter telegram announced that the steam yacht *Windward*, which took out the Jackson-Harmsworth Polar Expedition, had arrived at Vardö, and on Thursday another telegram, through the same Company's agency, stated that the expedition, after leaving Archangel, passed the winter on Franz Joseph Land, from which place a start was made in the middle of July. The crew appear to have suffered severely from scurvy, and all the members of it are more or less weakened by the malady. Three of the men succumbed, and two others were removed to the hospital at Vardö.

THE *Standard* states that the excavations that are being carried out by the Greek Archæological Society on the site of ancient Eleusis, a few miles from Athens, have just yielded some results of exceptional importance. In a very ancient and well-preserved tomb, there have been found, in addition to the skeleton of a woman, a number of articles, including earrings of fine gold, silver, and bronze, several finger rings, sixty-eight small vases of various shapes in terra-cotta, two tripods, three Egyptian scarabæi, and a small statuette of the goddess Isis in porcelain. These discoveries leave no doubt of the fact that the celebrated mysteries of Eleusis were of Egyptian origin, and were borrowed from the religious rites of the ancient Egyptians. These important relics have been deposited in the National Museum.

A REUTER'S telegram of September 11, from Berne, reported the fall of a huge mass of ice from the Altels Glacier upon the hamlet of Spitalmatte, in the Upper Gemmi Pass, causing the death of at least ten persons, and the loss of, it is estimated, two hundred head of cattle. A stretch of land nearly two miles