Now what is the difficulty with the dyne-C.G.S. system and why not inflict it on the young? What is the present system, if not an infliction?

At Blue Hill Observatory we have for some time been expressing temperatures in degrees absolute, pressures both atmospheric and vapor, in kilobars or kilodynes, and rainfall in millimeters. Dr. Shaw, of the British Meteorological Office, has since May 1, 1914, published rainfall values in the daily weather report in millimeters and beginning January 1, 1915, the millimeter is used in the weekly and monthly weather reports. In nearly every part of the world except the United States the millimeter has supplanted the inch as the unit of rainfall measurement. Of course it will be adopted here before long. As Shaw points out, aside from the advantage of using a unit generally adopted, the unit of rainfall 0.01 inch used to define a rain day has been most unsatisfactory. A fall of 1 mm. (0.04 inch) is a much fairer definition and as a matter of fact we have had to publish this in addition to the former.

From the point of view of the engineer, the use of the millimeter facilitates computation and realization of the amount of water available over a given area. A millimeter of rainfall means a liter of water per square meter.

Any one who has lived in the western part of the United States and recalls the various miners' inches for measuring water depth and flow will realize that it would be far from being an infliction to have the C.G.S. units come into general use in engineering practise.

It is not so difficult to break away from the old units as may be imagined. A year's constant use of the C.G.S. units makes one feel like saying, when reading of inch measurements, "Inch, inch? Where have we met that term before?"

Alexander McAdie
Harvard University

A SPURIOUS CASE OF MULTIPLE HUMAN BIRTHS

In the *Boston Medical and Surgical Journal* for September 26, 1872, under the head of Medical Miscellany occurs the following item:

Eight Children at a Birth.—On the 21st of August, Mrs. Timothy Bradlee, of Trumbull County, Ohio, gave birth to eight children—three girls and five boys. They are all living, and are healthy but quite small. Mr. Bradlee was married six years ago to Eunice Mowery, who weighed 273 pounds on the day of her marriage. She has given birth to two pairs of twins, and now eight more, making twelve children in six years. Mrs. Bradlee was a triplet, her mother and father being twins, and her grandmother the mother of five pairs of twins.

This case has been quoted often both in general texts, such as Gould and Pyle, "Anomalies and Curiosities of Medicine," 1897, p. 153, and in special papers, such as Wilder, *American Journal of Anatomy,* Vol. 3, p. 393, 1904. From the Prussian statistics gathered by Veit, it has been shown that twins occur on the average once in 88 births, triplets once in 7,910 births and quadruplets once in 371,126 births. Cases of five or six children at a birth are well authenticated, but are so rare that no statistical statements concerning them can be made. Gould and Pyle, in commenting on these instances, declare that all cases thus far reported of more than six children at a birth are to be regarded as of very doubtful value. To this category belongs that of Mrs. Bradlee already quoted. As this instance is of comparatively recent origin, it seemed possible to learn something of its authenticity. A letter was therefore addressed to the county clerk of Trumbull County, Ohio, inquiring about the case, and through the courtesy of that official the following reply was received.

M. B. Tayler,
Clerk of Courts,
Trumbull County
Warren, Ohio, March 30, 1914

Mr. G. H. Parker,
Cambridge, Mass.

Dear Sir: I reply to your letter of the 24th inst., in regard to the item in the medical journal, would say that after inquiry I am informed that there is no truth in the statement. It seems that a practical joker of those days went into one of the newspaper offices here and set up an article which he succeeded in having printed in one or two copies of the paper and then took the article out and distributed the type in their proper places, and se-

curing the copies which had the article in, sent the same to a New York paper thinking he had accomplished a great joke. This is practically all the information I can obtain in regard to the matter but can state that there is no truth or foundation in the report whatever.

Very truly yours,
(Signed) M. B. TAYLER

It is clear from this reply that the case of Mrs. Bradlee, so far as the number of children is concerned, is spurious and ought to be dropped from the list of authenticated multiple human births.

G. H. PARKER

HARVARD UNIVERSITY

SCIENTIFIC BOOKS

Some American Medical Botanists commemorated in our Botanical Nomenclature. By HOWARD A. KELLY. Troy, N. Y., The Southworth Company. 1914. 8vo. 215 pp., 42 pl.

In this attractive and beautifully printed volume, which is at once a contribution to medical history and the history of botany, Professor Kelly has conceived the genial thought of giving some memorial records of American physician-botanists whose names have been commemorated in plants, some of which were discovered or first described by them. This eponymic practise was introduced by Linnæus, who, when he found some guest or disciple to be heartily interested in botany, would often dedicate a new genus or species to him. Before Linnæus, plants were called after the names of the saints, *e. g.*, St. John's wort, St. Ignatius beans, etc.; and Pliny gives Eupatorium as the cognomen of Mithridates, King of Pontus, who discovered its virtues. Some of the eponyms formed from proper names were very inharmonious or barbarous, *e. g., Andrezejofskya, Eschscholtzia* (Chamisso), *Sirhookera* and *Peckifungus* (Kuntze). Some of these names were even misspelled, *e. g., Wisteria* for Wistar, but on the whole, what Kelly calls "amical floral nomenclature" was a pleasant practise, particularly in the eighteenth century, when friendly relations between European and American physicians were very close indeed. It is worth while to list Dr. Kelly's remarkable series of botanist-physicians with the plants attached to their names. They are:

Michel S. Sarrazin (1659–1734)—*Sarracenia purpurea* (Tournefort).

John Mitchell (1680–1768)—*Mitchella repens* (Linnæus).

Cadwalader Colden (1688–1776)—*Coldenia procumbens* (Linnæus).

John Clayton (1693–1773)—*Claytonia Virginica* (Gronovius).

John Bartram (1699–1777)—*Lantana Bartramii* (Baldwin).

Alexander Garden (1728–1792)—*Gardenia jasminoides* (Ellis).

Adam Kuhn (1741–1817)—*Kuhnia Eupatorioides* (Linnæus).

Moses Marshall (1758–1813)—*Marshallia trinerva* (Schreber).

Caspar Wistar (1761–1818)—*Wistaria speciosa* (Nuttall).

Benjamin Smith Barton (1766–1815)—*Bartonia decapetala* (Muhlenburg).

David Hosack (1769–1835)—*Hosackia bicolor* (Douglas).

William Baldwin (1779–1819)—*Baldwinia uniflora* (Nuttall).

William Darlington (1782–1863)—*Darlingtonia Californica* (Torrey).

James Macbride (1784–1817)—*Macbridea pulchra* (Elliott).

Jacob Bigelow (1787–1879)—*Bigelowia Menziesii* (De Candolle).

Charles Wilkins Short (1794–1863)—*Shortia galacifolia* (Gray).

John Torrey (1796–1873)—*Torreya taxifolia* (Arnott).

Zina Pitcher (1797–1872)—*Carduus Pitcheri* (Torrey).

Charles Pickering (1805–1878)—*Pickeringia Montana* (Nuttall).

John Leonard Riddell (1807–1865)—*Riddellia tagetina* (Nuttall).

George Engelmann (1809–1884)—*Engelmannia pinnatifida* (Torrey).

Alvan Wentworth Chapman (1809–1899)—*Chapmannia Floridana* (Torrey & Gray).

Asa Gray (1810–1888)—*Lilium Grayii* (Hooker & Arnott).

Arthur Wellesley Saxe (1820–1891)—*Rumex Saxei* (Kellogg).

Charles Christopher Parry (1823–1890)—*Lilium Parryi* (Watson).