that it was an advertisement of the metric system. I noticed that, although some stores were selling cloth measured in "shaku" and other ancient units, the size of shirts was in centimeters and distances by railroad were in kilometers.

A technician in a medical laboratory was trying to follow directions in a manual which called for a test-tube 20 millimeters in diameter. Not being familiar with the millimeter, she looked it up in a handbook and found that there were 25 millimeters in an inch, approximately. She marked her height on the wall, divided it into inches and then divided the inch into 25 parts. Such processes are often necessary in changing from one system to another. To avoid calculations as much as possible (at present when many people are out of work) it would be well to change over a great many measures into metric units (and to correct a number of errors).

Our grandfathers were told that a billion is a million million, and we find this usage in all the world except the United States. One of our Congresses spent a thousand million dollars and called it a billion, and ever since then ("by act of Congress") a thousand million has been a billion to us. In water analyses, if we express figures in "parts per billion," they are not understood by foreigners, so we have to explain them as (for instance) micrograms per kilogram or milligrams per metric ton. Until recently we have had little use for the unit microgram, and many persons abbreviate it by the Greek letter γ. One often sees the amount of a chemical substance recorded in so many "gammas" as though a gamma were a unit of measure instead of a unit of the alphabet. A more serious error is often made in the conception of the micro-meter, which is a millionth of a meter and not a thousandth of a millimeter. A micro-meter is abbreviated μ, and the micro-micro-meter $\mu\mu$. Many persons imagine that a micro-meter is a thousandth of a millimeter and suppose that a micro-micro-meter is a thousandth of a micro-meter, whereas it is a millionth of a micro-meter.

The "Western" scientist will not read a scientific paper if it is written in Chinese characters. We demand that the writer use the Latin alphabet. At the same time we are very careless in units of weights and measures. Perhaps in this period of unemployment the teaching of the metric system to a larger part of the population might be of advantage.

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REFLECTIONS ON TWO SCIENTIFIC NEWS ITEMS

TWO news items in SCIENCE for January 26 call for further comment. On page 76 the destruction by fire of Morrill Hall, of the University of Tennessee, is recorded. This means the loss to science of the Gattinger herbarium, on which the flora of the state, published in 1900, was based, as well as early collections by Ainslie, Bain, Kearney, Lamson-Scribner, Ruth and others. All these were of great scientific value, and are largely irreplaceable, since the native flora of vast areas has since been destroyed by lumbering, agriculture, grazing, etc. This serious blow to students of taxonomy and plant geography may well lead to queries: How many other botanical collections of historic and scientific importance are at present housed in buildings subject to destruction by fire? Can not some steps be taken to provide safer quarters for them?

On the preceding page it was noted that the director of a certain government organization is to retire by reason of age in June, but instead of receiving the usual pension of $1,200, he is to be made director emeritus at $5,000 per year. At the present time many eminent government scientists are being laid off with the same pension as is received by watchmen and stenographers. A few years age Dr. L. O. Howard, chief of the Bureau of Entomology and one of the leading scientists of the present day, was retired under such circumstances, and I have yet to notice in the pages of SCIENCE that any bill has been introduced into the Congress to make him chief emeritus at a salary commensurate with his value to the government. Query: How much of the people's money is being spent on special pensions for government workers who have succeeded in gaining political favor? Are any scientists being thus aided, in proportion to their ability, productiveness or usefulness to our country?

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WARNING CONCERNING AN IMPOSTOR

I AM writing a note of warning to readers of SCIENCE against a clever impostor who has been making the rounds of colleges—Minnesota, Iowa, Illinois, etc. He has a very clever story, doesn't ask for money, but in a number of known cases has received contributions. He works up each case to fit his "prospect," who was the classmate or friend of his "father" or "grandfather" in college. He will know all about his prospect.

According to his story, he was driving across country to fill an interneship at Toronto; met with an accident (at a place to fit each case); left about all of his money to bond himself, and was left short of funds, after buying his ticket to Toronto.

He is rather dark, dark hair, rather slight build, about 5 ft., 7 in. in height and about 26 years old.

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