found on comparing notes that this one, which they both said was large and extremely brilliant, had appeared about *twenty-five minutes past six*.

At night we attended the Governor's last "reception," prior to his leaving the colony. He was handing my wife to her carriage—I was unfortunately in the house—when another fine meteor illuminated the sky. It must have been in the west, or, from the position of the carriage and the buildings, my wife could not have seen it. She says it fell straight down from the zenith, and broke into several pieces. This occurred at 10.45; I had just previously looked at my watch. I also heard of other smaller, though bright, meteors, but did not see them myself. What are we doing, Mr. Editor? Are we going through the tail of a comet? or is cosmic dust igniting? or are these "dire and bloody" portents? Whatever they are, I record them, in the hope that others may have seen and noted them.

British Consulate, Noumea, July 21 E. L. LAYARD

The Milleporidæ

SPECIAL interest is attached to any direct evidence as to the nature of the reproductive organs in the Milleporidæ, the more especially as no traces whatever of such organs have hitherto been discovered. In the absence of any direct evidence it has been concluded that, from the apparent absence of ampullæ, the gonophores probably develop free of the cœnosteum; and this seemed partly borne out by the general resemblance between the zooids of the Milleporidæ and those of the gymnoblastic Hydroids.

On some dry specimens, however, of a new species of Millepora (*Millepora murrayi*, characterised by its extremely laminated and coalescent fronds, much and palmately divided at their extremities, and by its minute gastropores, .25 mm. wide, and its still more minute dactylopores and even surface) from the Philippines, there occur, irregularly and numerous distributed among the young branchlets of the cœnosteum, large receptacles, which, though the absence of the soft parts prevents any absolute confirmation thereof, can leave no doubt as to the true ampullate nature of the generative organs in this family. These receptacles occur either closely, or widely apart, as circular cavities in the superficial reticulations of the cœnosteum, and are covered above by a very thin and porous layer, which is often broken away. When it is thus laid open, the cavity is seen to be about .75 mm. in diameter. The receptacles are seen on the surface as white, circular, scarcely raised areas about .5 mm. in diameter, with a small pore in the centre; and they are generally rather numerous placed on one or both faces of the palmated branchlets.

By the discovery of the ampullæ in the Milleporidæ, a complete confirmation is given to the relationship which Prof. Moseley has shown to exist between this family and the Stylasteridæ; and it is seen that the two families are even more closely related than had been imagined. The presence of such a structure seems to bring the Milleporidæ into relationship rather with the calyptoblastic than with the gymnoblastic Hydroids, in spite of the general resemblance of its zooids with the latter.

JOHN J. QUELCH

Natural History Museum, South Kensington

To Find the Cube of any Number by Construction

THE following graphical construction for finding the cube of a number may interest more than the mere mathematician:—

Take a triangle ABC , in which suppose A to be the vertical angle and B greater than C . Draw the perpendiculars AD , BE , CF , thus obtaining the pedal triangle DEF ; take H the middle point of the perpendicular EG on DF . Then $\tan CDH = \tan^3 CDE = \tan^3 A$. If then we take a triangle with vertical angle A such that $\tan A = n$, we see that $\tan CDH = n^3$.

The proof of the above result is quite elementary.

September 22

R. TUCKER

The Failure of the Parsley Crop

WOULD you permit me to ask some subscribers to your paper if it be possible to account for the total failure of the crop of parsley this and last year. Is it owing to any known insect or what? The parsley comes up well, grows to about one inch in height, then begins to dwindle and get yellow, and the whole

summer remains about half an inch high, the only green part being the crown. All the market gardeners are in the same position as myself, only one having a crop, and this was sown in freshly cultivated earth. I have carefully examined leaves and roots under the microscope, but can discover no cause for this disease. Have any of your subscribers been troubled in the same manner, and can any one suggest a remedy? W. H. C. B.

Cheltenham, September 23

Wasps as Fly-Killers

YOUR correspondent at p. 385, vol. xxx., may be informed that in this part of the world wasps enter dwellings by the open windows in summer-time, and hunt house-flies unmercifully, leaving the dead flies in hundreds on the floors, ready to be swept into a dustpan. This occurs only in the country, and where wasps' nests are near by. Westwood quotes from St. John's "Letters to an American Farmer" that: "The Americans, aware of their (wasps') service in destroying flies, sometimes suspend a hornets' nest in their parlours" (Introduction to "Modern Classification of Insects," ii. p. 246, foot-note).

GEORGE LAWSON

Dalhousie College, Halifax, Nova Scotia, September 8

GEORGE BENTHAM

WE recently announced the death of the veteran botanist, George Bentham, when within a few days of his eighty-fourth birthday. His life, from a very early age, was one of incessant mental activity, and of much change and vicissitude during its three or four first decades. Through his birth, connections, and various residences on the continent of Europe, as well as in England, he became acquainted with many men famous in literature, science, and art, and his career is rendered especially notable from its intimate association with his uncle Jeremy, the jurist, in the arrangement of whose papers and preparation of whose works for the press he was actively engaged for not a few years, and with whom he resided on the most intimate terms as companion and secretary till the death of that relative in 1832. This and the scientific value now attached to the "pedigree" have suggested the expediency of entering with some detail into the family history and early life of Mr. Bentham (for most of which we are indebted to information imparted by himself) before detailing his botanical career and writings.

About the year 1750 Jeremiah Bentham, an attorney or solicitor, one of a family of scribes who, as fathers and sons, had inhabited the Minories since the beginning of the seventeenth century, migrated to the West End of London, purchasing property in Queen's Square Place and Petty France (now York Street, on the south side of Birdcage Walk, St. James's Park). He had two sons: the elder, Jeremy, the well-known writer on Jurisprudence, the younger, Samuel (subsequently Sir Samuel), father to George, the botanist. Samuel devoted himself to the study of naval architecture, and at the age of twenty-two visited the arsenals of the Baltic for the purpose of improving himself. From thence he travelled far into Siberia, and became intimate with Prince Potemkin, who induced him to enter into the service of the Empress Catherine, at first in a civil, and afterwards in a military, capacity. In the latter he took a distinguished part in a naval action against the Turks on the Black Sea. For this he received the Cross of St. George, and was given the command of a regiment quartered in Siberia, which enabled him to penetrate eastward to the frontier of China. After ten years of absence he returned to England, and was shortly afterwards promoted to the rank of general. The death of Catherine followed soon after, when he was offered employment in England by his friend Earl Spencer, then First Lord of the Admiralty, who was anxious to avail himself of Gen. Bentham's ingenuity and experience in