country. Only a few remarks are called for. The section on surveying includes a good description of the methods and instruments usually employed in the measurement of land, and gives specimen pages of field books. In the part dealing with weights and measures there are tables not only of the metric system, the use of which is now general throughout France, but also of various old French denominations, which, if not used at the present time in commerce or science, are at least often met with in legal documents. Particulars of the weights and measures of foreign countries are also given, and so far as regards the English system these are generally accurate. The compiler is not, however, aware that the metric carat of 200 mg. is the only legal unit of weight in this country for diamonds and precious stones, as he gives the equivalent of the obsolete English carat on p. 41. The troy weights mentioned on p. 44 are not, as there stated, used in this country by chemists; we have a special apothecaries' weight. On the whole, the work bears evidence of careful compilation, and is likely to prove useful to the professional men to whom it particularly appeals.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR.

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Patents and Scientific Research.

IN connection with the excellent article on "Patents and Scientific Research" in NATURE of February 21, may I direct the attention of your readers to another article on the same subject published in *Science Progress* of January, 1914? Both articles must be read if any attempt is to be made to fit the patent system on to scientific research.

In my opinion, however, much the best way to encourage high intellectual effort of all kinds would be to establish a national pension fund for men whose work in any line has been of benefit to large numbers of the public without being remunerative to themselves, or, as sometimes happens, while being of actual pecuniary disadvantage to themselves. I have suggested this idea over and over again, but regret that I cannot get anyone to pay attention to it. For Britain, the present Civil List Pensions should be converted into such a pension scheme as I suggest. The pensions, which I anticipate would scarcely amount to more than 20,000*l.* a year altogether for Britain, ought to be allotted by a standing committee with a paid office—somewhat in the manner of the Nobel prizes. Of course, decision on rival merits of possible candidates may often be difficult, but the same difficulties now present themselves to all learned societies in allotting medals and other honours, and also to the Premier in allotting Civil List Pensions.

Yet another method is to admit the precedent of Jenner, who received 30,000*l.* on petitioning Parliament. I tried this method, as a test of the intelligence of the country, before the war (see *Science Pro-*

gress, October, 1915); but the present Premier, when he was Chancellor of the Exchequer, refused to allow my petition to go forward, although my lawyers assured me that it was a perfectly valid one.

At present the British nation is paying large sums of money to supply junior scientific workers with laboratory facilities and small salaries for doing pot-boiler scientific work in the hope of possibly making some discovery in the future, while it gives nothing whatever to those who have already done work of established and even universal value. I wonder why our countrymen find it so difficult to understand such simple ideas.

RONALD ROSS,

Editor of *Science Progress*.

36 Harley House, London, N.W.1, March 4.

Whale-meat in War Time.

AN announcement in the daily Press states that whale-meat furnished the principal article of food at a luncheon given in New York by the American Museum of Natural History to demonstrate the possibilities of whale-meat for home consumption, in order that the beef thus saved might be sent by America to relieve the scarcity prevailing among the Allies in Europe.

All who were privileged to partake of this luncheon must have gone away satisfied that the substitution of this meat for beef and mutton would entail no hardship, but, on the contrary, would prove a welcome addition to the bill of fare. This at any rate is the conclusion arrived at by members of the staff of the British Museum of Natural History, who have recently experimented with the flesh of a white-beaked dolphin stranded on the Suffolk coast.

Unfortunately, we can do little to assist in this saving, for the whales in our home-waters cannot be "fished," since neither ships nor men are available for the purpose. Similarly, lack of tonnage prevents importation from the Antarctic waters and elsewhere under cold storage.

It is to be hoped, however, that the fullest possible use will be made of the carcasses of the various species of Cetacea stranded around our coasts. Of course, no great quantity of meat would thus be obtained, but locally it should form a very welcome addition to the scanty meat rations now of necessity prevailing.

Whale-meat has no fat, but is encased in a thick layer of "blubber," which, when boiled down with water, yields a large quantity of clear, amber-coloured oil, just now very precious. It has, however, a slight and rather unpleasant odour, but it should not be difficult to eliminate this.

The dark red colour of whale-meat is likely to arouse prejudice against it. But if those who have opportunity will only make trial of its qualities as a food, they will find it scarcely distinguishable from beef, and quite as palatable. Such experiments may well create a demand for this meat after the war. This should lead to a revival of the now extinct Dundee whaling industry, remodelled after the methods followed by the Norwegians, in whose hands modern whaling now almost entirely rests. The difficulty of finding suitable gunners could easily be overcome by employing men trained in the Navy. Many new industries will arise among us after the war. This may well be among the number. It is ridiculous to suppose that we are unable to master the requirements of modern whaling; but, as matters now stand, British whaling companies have to depend for their principal officers on Norwegians. There is no reason why this state of things should continue.

W. P. PYCRAFT.