

and that, as a rule, they have chosen the capitals or the principal observatories of the nations to which they respectively belonged. Hence the multiplication of meridians of reference throughout the world. Within a comparatively recent period communications between the peoples of different nations have been greatly facilitated, and intercourse has proportionately increased. It has consequently been felt that the variety of first meridians is embarrassing and unnecessary. For a number of years the question of reducing this number has been under consideration; it has been brought before the geographical congress at Antwerp, and again at Paris. The question has been examined by different societies, and various proposals have been submitted, but unanimity with respect to the selection of a prime meridian to be common to all nations has in no way been attained. Repeated efforts have been made to gain general concurrence to the adoption of one of the existing national meridians, but these proposals have tended to retard a settlement of the question by awakening national sensibilities, and thus creating a barrier difficult to remove. Other proposals to select an entirely new initial line, unrelated to any one of the first meridians at present recognized, have but little advanced the settlement of the question, as such a course encounters difficulties of another kind, difficulties so serious in their character as to render the proposals almost impracticable.

There are reasons for a unification of first meridians which every year become stronger, and, as the question affects the whole area of civilization, its consideration should be approached in a broad, liberal spirit. While it may be urged that the selection of any particular meridian is less important than the adoption of a common first meridian, care should be taken to consider the interests of all people concerned or likely to be concerned, scrupulously avoiding offence to local prejudice or national vanity. On every account it is extremely