

The Canadian Engineer

Vol. XI.—No. 4.

TORONTO AND MONTREAL, APRIL, 1904.

PRICE 10 CENTS
\$1.00 PER YEAR.

The Canadian Engineer.

ISSUED MONTHLY IN THE INTERESTS OF THE

CIVIL, MECHANICAL, ELECTRICAL, LOCOMOTIVE, STATIONARY
MARINE, MINING AND SANITARY ENGINEER, THE SURVEYOR,
THE MANUFACTURER, THE CONTRACTOR AND THE
MERCHANT IN THE METAL TRADES.

SUBSCRIPTION—Canada, Great Britain and the United States, \$1.00 per year,
foreign, 6s. Advertising rates on application.

OFFICES—18 Court St. Toronto; and Fraser Building, Montreal.
Toronto Telephone, Main 4310. Montreal Telephone, Main 2589.
BIGGAR-SAMUEL, LIMITED, Publishers.

All business correspondence should be addressed to our Montreal office. Editorial matter, cuts, electros and drawings should be addressed to the Toronto Office, and should be sent whenever possible, by mail, not by express. The publishers do not undertake to pay duty on cuts from abroad. Changes of advertisements should be in our hands not later than the 15th of the preceding month or if proof is desired, 4 days earlier.

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METRIC MEASURES AND WEIGHTS.

It is well to hear both sides of a question of such great consequence as a change from the English to the metric system of weights and measures. The change would certainly involve great expense throughout the English-speaking world, especially in the engineering trades, and it is not likely to be undertaken unless manufacturers and merchants feel sure that the present cost will have its compensations in the future. On the last point British manufacturers and merchants appear to have made up their minds, considering the consistent advocacy of the metric system by nearly all the Chambers of Commerce and scientific institutions and expressed opinions of a majority of the members of the House of Commons, and, more noteworthy, by the action of that conservative legislative body, the House of Lords, which has passed the second reading of a bill to make the metric system compulsory in Great Britain in 1906. A bill is also before the United States Congress to make the metric system compulsory in that country in 1907, but it will not pass if the authors of a new book, called "The Metric Fallacy," represent the general opinion of our neighbors. The book is the joint work of Frederick A. Halsey and Samuel S. Dale.

Mr. Halsey is an editorial writer on our ably edited contemporary, The American Machinist, a journal whose conductors advocate the metric system as strongly as Mr. Halsey opposes it. Mr. Dale is editor of The Textile World-Record, of Boston, and deals with the metric system as applied to textile manufacturing. The authors must have credit for arraying against the metric system nearly all that can be brought forward. The chief purpose of the book is to show that, while the metric system has been officially adopted in so many countries during the last hundred years, it has not completely displaced the local measures and those pertaining to particular trades, and that, therefore, it has been a failure and a fallacy. This is not a logical deduction. We must admit that the authors have proved clearly the persistence of local weights and measures in certain districts and in certain trades in metric countries; but this only shows the persistence of local customs and the extreme conservatism of artisans in particular trades, where the old guild idea still prevails, in the midst of changes that have affected the general trade and manufacturing interests of the country. It only shows that many people prefer to go on in the ruts their fathers made for them rather than take the trouble to learn a new way. Let us apply Messrs. Halsey and Dale's reasoning to other questions—Christianity, for instance. The Christian life was first fully explained and exemplified by Jesus Christ 1900 years ago. His doctrines have been nominally accepted by peoples speaking over 400 different languages and dialects; and advocates of Christianity claim that these principles form the best rule of life for all those people, and that such principles will be ultimately accepted by the whole world as the ideal system of social and political government. But as a matter of fact we find that after nineteen centuries the doctrines of Christianity have been rejected by thousands of individuals in each one of the so-called Christian countries, and that whole communities have continued from generation to generation in undisguised disregard of the fundamental laws of Christianity; therefore Christianity is a failure and a fallacy.

This appears to be the line of argument brought against the metric system; but, as we are sure that the authors of the "Metric Fallacy" would not make such sweeping deductions against Christianity because a majority of the citizens of Christian countries do not apply those doctrines to their own lives, so we are sure the average reader will not condemn the metric system just because certain trades stick to their local customs and do not appreciate the advantages of the newer system. Although the metric system was proclaimed in 1793, it was not till 1840 that it was made compulsory in France; and even now, after more than 100 years there are industries such as those of silk manufacturing in which old terms are still used in the factories. When we remember that this is the case in the land which originated the metric system, we need not be surprised to learn that local customs still persist in Germany, Turkey and other countries whose Govern-