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The Metric System. The metric system of weights and measures is to be commended on the same grounds as the decimal system of currency, those of simplicity and convenience. The metric system has been widely adopted in Europe, and there is quite a persistent agitation in the United States in favor of its adoption in that country. Bills having this in view have been introduced at the present session of Congress, but it is doubtful whether they will meet with more immediate success than have similar measures in previous sessions. Still it seems probable that the adoption of the metric system in the United States is to be expected in the course of time, and the time may not be very long. The New York Tribune in alluding to the subject, says: "Much can be said in favor of the metric system itself. The innumerable computations of commerce are vastly more simple when fractional amounts are expressed in decimals than when in thirds, twelfths and sixteenths. Every reader of popular magazines is continually being confronted with references to kilometres, kilograms and litres, and unless he is familiar with the distances, weights and volumes thus represented he fails to understand the statement there made. Furthermore, nearly every other civilized country in the world, England excepted, has already adopted this standard. It is essential, therefore, that some of the American manufacturers who seek a market abroad should do the same. The sizes of articles should suit the requirements of the customer, and should be described in phraseology which is intelligible to him." The Tribune points out that the system has already been adopted in the United States to a greater extent than is generally supposed. It notes certain practical and other objections to the system, but concludes that when the change has once been wrought the American people will wonder why it was never done before.

Wireless Telephony. If wireless telegraphy shall prove to be a thing of practical value, and indeed the matter has now gone beyond a peradventure, there would seem good reason to suppose that wireless telephony will also develop to practical results. We have heard less indeed about the latter than the former, but Mr. Walden Fawcett, in an article in the February Harper's, holds that wireless telephony is keeping almost equal pace with the sister invention. We are told that by the system which has been recently developed by Professor A. Frederick Collins of Philadelphia, spoken words are transmitted great distances through the ground without the use of a connecting wire, and in accordance with a plan totally different from that of the Marconi system of wireless telegraphy. The Collins system simply takes advantage of the fact that there are natural electrical currents in evidence slightly below the surface of the earth at any point that may be selected, and by this invention currents of this character are utilized to cause a flow of electricity between two instruments stationed above the surface of the earth. The only underground mechanism employed consists of small zinc-wire screens, which are buried in shallow holes, one at the sending station and the other at the receiving station. Above these are tripods supporting transmitting and receiving apparatus, such as is employed in ordinary telephony, a wire affording connection in each case with the buried screen. When the electricity from a storage battery is turned on, sounds of all kinds may be sent through the transmitter, and heard in many instances, even more distinctly than were a regular overhead telephone employed.

The Opening of Parliament. With the customary ceremonies the Dominion Parliament was opened by the Governor-General, Lord Minto, on Wednesday. The speech is not of unusual length or importance, and does not foreshadow any important legislation. It begins by expressing gratitude to Divine Providence for the many blessings which Canada has received during the past year and particularly for the exceptionally

bountiful harvest in Manitoba and the Northwest Territories. There follows fitting allusion to the visit of the Prince and Princess of Wales, the assassination of President McKinley and the desirability of laws to insure the punishment of anarchists. There is also allusion to the results of the census and its indications as to growth in population, to the Marconi scheme of trans-Atlantic telegraphy and negotiations which the Government has entered into with the inventor, which it is hoped may finally result to the great advantage of the country. The Governor-General congratulates Parliament on the satisfactory condition of the revenue and on the steady and continuous expansion of the general business of the country, as evidenced by the increased volume of exports and imports. With a view to developing trade still farther with other countries, Parliament will probably be asked to make provision for increasing the number of commercial agencies. Parliament is informed that the Governments of Australia and New Zealand have accepted the invitation of Canada to attend a conference in London next June, for the consideration of trade, transportation, cable and other matters of intercolonial concern, and it is hoped that the meeting may lead to an extension of Canadian trade with those important portions of His Majesty's dominions. The establishment of a direct steamship service with South Africa is foreshadowed. The speech also alludes to His Majesty's invitation to the Premier of Canada to be present at the Coronation ceremonies in June next, and the hope is expressed that the presence of the leading statesmen of the several colonies upon that occasion will afford an opportunity for discussing subjects of mutual interest which may considerably affect the development of the trade and commerce of this country with the mother country and with the sister colonies.

A Ceremony in the Tower of London. Mr. I. N. Ford, in his London Correspondence to the *New York Tribune*, mentions a quiet, unpretentious but interesting ceremony which took place on February 7th, in the vault of St. Peter's church in the Tower of London. The ceremony was the erection of a tablet recording that within the wall of the vault were deposited two chests containing the remains of many distinguished persons who had been beheaded on Tower Hill, and which for a time were interred beneath the floor of the chancel and nave. The removal of these remains, which included the bones of Lady Jane Grey, her husband, Lord Guildford Dudley, the Duke of Northumberland and the Duke of Suffolk, all executed during the reign of Queen Mary, was carried out about forty years ago.

Alliance between Great Britain and Japan. The announcement made last week by the British Government of an alliance between Great Britain and Japan took the nation wholly by surprise. According to the statement of Lord Landsdowne in a parliamentary paper announcing the alliance, the purpose had in view is that the independence and integrity of the Chinese Empire should be preserved and that there should be no disturbance of the *status quo* either in China or the adjoining regions. Lord Landsdowne disclaims on the part of his Government anything aggressive or self-seeking in entering upon this contract with Japan. He says it is concluded merely as a measure of precaution and that it in no way threatens the present position or legitimate interests of other powers. The first article of the agreement states that the high contracting parties, having mutually recognized the independence of China and Corea, declare themselves to be entirely uninfluenced by any aggressive tendency toward either country, but having in view their especial interests of which those of Great Britain relate principally to China, while Japan, in addition to the interests she possesses in China, is interested in a particular degree, politically as well as commercially and industrially, in Corea, the signatories recognize that it will be ad-

missable for either of them to take such measures as may be indispensable in order to safe-guard these interests, if these be threatened either by the aggressive action of any other power, or by disturbances arising in China or Corea. Article 3 provides that if either Great Britain or Japan, in defence of their respective interests, as above described, should become involved in a war with another power, the other contracting power will maintain strict neutrality and use its efforts to prevent other powers from joining in the hostilities against its ally; and article 3 further provides that if in the above event, any other power or powers should join in hostilities against that ally, the other contracting party will come to its assistance and will conduct war in common and make peace in mutual agreement with it. The agreement goes into force immediately, remains in force five years and continues binding for a year after either party shall give notice of its termination. While the announcement of the alliance has caused profound surprise in England, the tone of the London press generally indicates popular approval of the action taken. The alliance is of course interpreted as expressing a purpose to resist the dismemberment of China and especially to checkmate any aggressive movements on the part of Russia in eastern Asia. It is believed that the United States will be in sympathy with the position taken by Great Britain and Japan.

Prohibitory Law Introduced in Ontario. A Prohibition Bill on the lines of the Manitoba Act was introduced by Premier Ross in the Ontario Legislature on Wednesday last. The great popular interest in the subject was shown by the crowd which filled every available foot of room in the galleries and lobbies of the House. Every member too was in his place. Mr. Ross addressed the Legislature in a speech which dealt with the subject of liquor legislation and the position of his Government in relation thereto at very considerable length. A good deal of time was occupied in a discussion of the principle of the referendum, its constitutionality and its applicability to the question of prohibition. Having announced the Government's intention to submit the Act if approved by the Legislature to the people by a referendum, Mr. Ross proceeded to state the conditions under which the electorate would be asked to pronounce upon the measure. The date of the referendum will be the second Tuesday in October, or the 14th day of that month. The question will be decided by a majority of the electorate.—This does not mean, however, a majority of all the names on the electoral lists, nor does it mean necessarily a majority of the vote cast in the referendum. The number of votes cast in favor of the Act must be equal to a majority of the total number of votes that shall be polled at the approaching general Provincial election. The ordinary vote is about 400,000, and in a very keen election might run to 440,000, which means from 75 to 80 per cent. of the whole number of names on the electoral lists. If then 40 per cent. of the electors of the Province shall cast their votes in the affirmative the Act will be confirmed. The voting lists for the referendum will be the same as those for the Provincial elections. The Bill makes no provision for compensation of those engaged in the liquor traffic. Premier Ross, however, intimated that in the event of the law being confirmed the question of compensation might be considered a suitable one for a Parliamentary Committee to deal with. It is perhaps too soon to say how the action taken by the Ontario Government in this matter will be received by the public. Some newspaper reports are indeed representing that some prohibitionists are keenly indignant at the announcement in reference to the referendum, on the ground that the demand for a number of votes equal to a majority of those cast in the general election renders the popular confirmation of the Act impossible. Such an objection can hardly be regarded as a reasonable one. It seems to us that the popular backing asked for by Premier Ross is not stronger than should be given if the law is expected to be an efficient instrument for the promotion of the temperance reform.