

It requires no argument to show that no one of these six terms is appropriate. The unit of time is not a day in the ordinary sense ; it is indeed much more than an ordinary day. According to our habit of thought, a day is invariably associated with alternations of light and darkness ; and each day, moreover, has a definite relationship to some locality on the surface of the earth. The day as we commonly understand it is essentially local ; and during each rotation of the globe on its axis, occupying a period of twenty-four hours, there are as many days as there are spots on sea and on land differing in longitude. These numberless days are separate and distinct, each having its noon and midnight, its sunrise and sunset. The time-unit is an entirely different conception ; it is equal in length to a day, and must from its nature be synchronous with some one of the infinite number of local days ; by the resolutions of the Washington Conference it is identified with the civil day of Greenwich ; but while the latter is simply a local division of time limited to the Greenwich Meridian, the unit measure is, on the other hand, not so limited ; it is equally related to all points on the earth's surface in every latitude and longitude. Under this aspect, the wider functions and general character of the unit measure remove it from the category of ordinary days, as we understand the familiar expression, and to obviate all doubt and uncertainty regarding it, it is in the highest degree desirable that the universal time-unit should be distinguished by some appellation by which, apart from its local relationship, it may always be indisputably known.

It was Lord Chief Justice Coke who said that "error is the parent of confusion ;" as the primary object of time reform is to obviate confusion, we should take every precaution to preclude error. Is it not therefore expedient that we should adopt means to secure a proper and appropriate designation for the unit measure and abandon as misnomers each one of the terms which have hitherto been applied to it? In a paper on the subject of time reckoning, published in the transactions of this Society in 1886, the unit measure is defined, its uses described, and it is likewise pointed out that its distinctive appellation remains undetermined. I consider it to be my duty to draw attention to the want, and while it would be an act of presumption on my part to propose a name, I will venture the remark that in the general interests of science an effort should be made to supply it. It has been found expedient to derive technical terms from a classical etymology, and I beg leave to suggest that the same rule might be followed in this case with obvious advantage. Whatever name be chosen, if derived from a Greek or Latin root, the word would in all countries have the same definite meaning, and could readily be incorporated into all languages. If such a word be adopted as will clearly express "a unit measure of time" it will gradually come into general use, as in the parallel cases of "telegram," "telegraph," "photograph," "lithograph," etc., and by this means all nationalities will be enabled to give expression to one and the same meaning when they refer to time reckoning in its broad significance.

I humbly submit that the Royal Society of Canada will confer a general benefit and act becomingly by taking the initiative in obtaining an appropriate designation for the unit measure of time.

If that view be concurred in by this Section of the Society, I respectfully suggest that a special committee be appointed to consider the subject, with instructions to report during the present session.