

guage of the United States press when the Alaska boundary dispute came up, "There's nothing to arbitrate." Then when it became evident that the town was appealing to the Legislature the company consented to arbitrate on condition that the town would buy one of its useless plants—a proposal that would take out of the field of arbitration the only point worth arbitrating, from the town's side of the case. The result of this effort of private ownership to obtain the full pound of flesh is that Napanee has been entirely freed from the restrictions of the Com-mee Act, and that measure stands condemned in one important respect. From losses arising out of their own mistakes private companies cannot expect to be exempt any more than other individuals, who have to suffer for their want of knowledge or want of judgment. The fact of their holding a public franchise confers upon them no right of immunity in this regard, and where they appeal to public sympathy they should at least show some consideration for the public needs in return. The exemption of Napanee from the Act is not enough; the Act itself should be amended so it will be just as impossible for a private company to play the dog in the manger with a town as it is now impossible for a municipality to confiscate the property of the private corporation.



THE METRIC FALLACY.

Editor Canadian Engineer:

In the March issue of the Canadian Engineer, there appeared a letter by Albert S. Merrill, supporting the Metric System, but containing so many errors that they should not be allowed to pass without correction.

Mr. Merrill says: "It is of little consequence to know the exact number of countries which have adopted this system." Did you ever see a dish of sour grapes? A list of countries to the number of forty-three, which are assumed by the metricites to use this system, forms a stock part of all pro-metric literature; but now that it has been shown how imperfect is the adoption of the system in many of these countries, Mr. Merrill tells us that the list is of "little consequence." Whatever your readers may think of this, they will, I think consider it of much consequence that the metricites have based their case upon simple assumptions which have now been proven to be untrue.

Of the "Reports of Her Majesty's Representatives Abroad," to which Mr. Merrill refers, it should be said that, like all enquiries of this kind, prior to the one undertaken by Mr. Dale and myself, they related to commercial and not to factory units of measure. Her Majesty's representatives did not discover, for example, that while French silk fabrics are *sold* by the meter, they are *made* by the aune; they did not discover that while German cotton fabrics are *sold* by the meter they are *made* by the English yard.

It is useless to quote the results of enquiries regarding commercial units against the results of our enquiry regarding factory units. The metricites have always assumed that in metric countries factory units were, of course, purely metric, whereas wherever Mr. Dale and I have succeeded in getting behind the factory doors, we have found old units in swarms. Until our facts are disproven—which they cannot be—our case must stand.

In the countries which Mr. Merrill quotes from, these reports the commercial use of the system is, without exception, compulsory. The people use it commercially because they are compelled to do so—because they have no choice in the matter. Whenever we enquire into the situation in countries in which the use of the system is optional, that is in which the people are given a choice, we uniformly find that they condemn the system by refusing to use it, and this is true of many of the countries which form part of the regular list of countries which, according to the metricites long ago, (in the case of Greece 70 years ago), "adopted" the system. There are many of these countries in which the use of the system is optional among the

people, and in no country of this kind is the system the usual one in trade and commerce. These statements are facts, which no amount of metric sophistry can obscure.

Mr. Merrill says that Monsieur Chalon "demonstrated by numerous examples that the old names, which persist in France, were not the old measures; they were simply popular expressions habitually used to express certain metric and decimal divisions." It is well known that the old French inch is the common short unit of measure in French textile mills, and it is also well known that it measures 37 to the meter. I have in my possession a scale containing these French inches, and the above is their ratio to the meter. Will Mr. Merrill please name the metric unit for which the French inch stands, and also the metric unit of which it is a decimal division? M. Paul Lamoitier, one of the collaborators of l'Industrie Textile, says in that paper, when speaking of the conditions in the French textile industry, "we are as much in the anarchy of weights and measures in the textile industry as at the time of the Revolution, for we have the denier . . . the aune . . . the moque . . . the livre, the quart, the sous, the yard . . . etc. Ah! the famous aune, do you know its value? Exactly 3 feet 7 inches 10 lines 10 points, or, in other words, 1,188,447 meters."

Will Mr. Merrill be so good as to tell your readers for what new units these old names stand, especially the aune, the value of which is given with so much exactness by M. Lamoitier?

The livre is equal to half a kilogram, and none of the other units in this list can by any stretch of the imagination be called metric. This explanation is born of desperation and is not true. Repeating this disproven story does no credit to Mr. Merrill's knowledge of the facts.

Mr. Merrill tells us: "The Metric System has been repeatedly endorsed by congresses of textile manufacturers in Europe," and he is quite right. They have endorsed, re-endorsed, and endorsed it again, but somehow the textile mills go on using the old units. Your readers should understand that Mr. Dale has demonstrated that, except in the cotton industry in France (which uses the meter as a long and the inch as a short unit of length) the textile mills of metric Europe do not use the Metric System as a mill system. Of what matter is it if congresses go on endorsing it to the end of time so long as the mills ignore their recommendations?

Your readers will recognize, if Mr. Merrill does not, that the object of these numerous European textile congresses—the introduction of the Metric System in the textile industry—is a confession that the system is not now used in that industry as are all their recommendations that it be used. They will also recognize that the congresses flatly contradict all claims that the old names are "popular expressions habitually used to express certain metric and decimal divisions."

In his reference to these endorsements, Mr. Merrill exhibits the weakness of the metric case, which rests on resolutions and laws and not on the practice of the people.

Their list of metric countries is made up of those that have passed laws of some kind favorable to the system, these laws ranging all the way from those which, like our own, merely permit the use of the system to those which compel its use, but all of which are treated alike. Do you doubt it? Then turn to page XVIII. of any number of the Monthly Bulletin of the International Bureau of American Republics, issued from the Government Printing Office, at Washington, and you will find the following printed from standing type:

"The Metric System has been adopted by the following named countries: Argentine Republic, Bolivia, Brazil, Chili, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Honduras, Mexico, Paraguay, United States of America and Venezuela."

I will not characterize this statement for it is unnecessary. Your readers should take it as an illustration of how little is needed to place a country in the metric list, for our country is not the only one there which is placed there because it has passed a permissive law and done nothing more. Information which I have, and which is referred to more at length in the next paragraph, shows that in many of the countries of the above list the system is not used by the people any more than in our own.

Mr. Merrill objects to my statement that "nowhere has the system been adopted by any people except under compulsion." I have in my possession a collection of letters from