Ever Again?

TO F. J. R.

Bright shone the stars. In the moonlight clear
Gleamed the dew on the slumbering heather.
The lights o'er the water seemed wondrously near,
As we wandered that evening together.

The shadows are dark on the water to-night;
The wind o'er the heather sighs drearily.
Shall we ever again find the moonbeams so bright?
Tell me, my dearest one, shall we?

H. C. S.

The Adoption of the Metric System.

ONE of the latest articles on the adoption of the French system of weights and measures is by Mr. Coleman Sellers, of William Sellers & Co., Philadelphia. This gentleman, in his recent travels in Europe, has paid considerable attention to this subject, and, as his firm has for a number of years used the metric system in some departments of its works, he speaks from personal observation and experience. He says that a report of the Paris Geographical Society, which shows that countries representing a population of two hundred and forty-two millions are using the French system, while only those representing ninety-eight millions are using the English system, is misleading, for the following reasons: First, because, in countries which have nominally adopted the French standard, the English is extensively in use, as in iron rolling, screw cutting, and the measurement of boards, dry goods, and other merchandise; second, because the basis of population is not the one which shows the interest involved, since, for example, “the confusion and loss caused by a change in the system of measurement in Russia, with her millions of peasantry, would be less than that sustained in the city of Philadelphia alone from a like cause.

Millions of those numbered among the people who use the French system have no occasion to use any or know any system whatever, save in the very crudest form.”

It is thus evident that the population now making practical use of the English standard is greatly in excess of that using by force the French system. Mr. Sellers thus expresses the result of his observations in this matter: “With all this long practice during my connection with the firm, I have written and spoken against the enforced adoption of the system not only because of the expense involved in changing, but because it is not a practical system; it permits of no elastic gradation of shop or trade sizes.” The metre is too large, and the decimetre too small, to replace the foot, while there is no convenient unit like the inch, the centimetre being too small for such operations as determining the pitch of screws; also, the litre being of a cubical shape, its transposition into a shape such as is commonly and conveniently used involves the quadrature of the circle.

A person so well known as Mr. Sellers is excellent authority, and his opinions appear to be confirmed by the disinclination of the people of the United States to adopt this system, though made legal. Nevertheless, it does seem as though a simplification of the present standards and tables of weights and measures would result beneficially, especially if the units adopted by different nations could be made not necessarily the same, but easily convertible one into another. The expense and confusion of such a change would be of comparatively short duration, and, in our own country, for example, would do away with the annoyance arising from the multiplicity of units suggested by the following terms: Avoirdupois, troy, and apothecaries’ weights; dry and liquid measure; nautical and statute miles; fathoms, leagues, cords, stones, hands, sizes, lines, links, etc., etc., to say nothing of the irregular progression in all the tables of measures of extension and capacity.

The metric is not the only possible decimal system, nor is the use of decimals alone necessary. The combination of decimals with the “halving” process in our monetary system has been found admirably adapted to use, and it is reasonable to suppose that, beginning with a gradual abandonement of many superfluous terms, and aided by proper legislation, the people of