DIPPINGS AND CLIPPINGS.

The ancient Romans used to keep account of the years by driving each year a nail into the Temple of Minerva; thus each nail became a sort of hieroglyph, and the shrine of the owl-eyed Goddess of Wisdom, the reliquary of a series of units of occult significance. From the Temple of Minerva to the portal of the rationalistic Twentieth Century, is a long hark, but we have travelled it, collecting and acquiring on our way much knowledge on many subjects, but on none more than on the very subject of which the nails in the temple were a sign—the subject of numeration.

DECIMALS AND DECIMALISATION BY ARTHUR HARVEY, F. R. S. C.

The latest addition to fact and theory along this line comes from the pen of Arthur Harvey, F. R. S. C., of Toronto, and is entitled, "Decimals and Decimalisation."

It is the office of the literary artist to make any topic he touches not only vital, but enjoyable; that Mr. Harvey is able to breathe a living spirit into the dry bones of such a theme as decimals shows him to be an artist of no mean order, while his technical handling of his subject proves him a logician beyond reach of cavil. At the outset, we have a proem skilfully managed. In a couple of paragraphs we get hints that bring before the eye of fancy that dry rogue Autolycus, perhaps Shakespeare's choicest rascal, with his ballads, and his ribbons, and his cambrics, and his lawns, and his "pins and poking-sticks of steel"; of Polixenes and Camillo; of the clown Mopsa, Dorcas and the rest; of Florizel and "the prettiest low-born lass that ever ran on the green sward," Perdita, "the queen of curds and cream;" and incidentally we have the keynote to the on-coming discussion, in the difficulties the clown experiences in making a reckoning of a certain yield of wool and its fetching—"without counters." This incident, the author points out, brings us "close to one of the chief reforms of recent times, namely, the use in arithmetic, not merely of decimals, but even of the figures which we now employ."

Following this, Mr. Harvey takes a brief glance at the history of early systems of numeration, touches lucidly on the decimal system, which, by the way, stepped westward to us along the same road our language stepped (from India by way of Arabia), and supplanted, as the language supplanted, Rome and what was Roman. Some nice bits of history are brought in under the clauses dealing with the duodecimal and sexagesimal systems, and the stirring times of the French Revolution are solidified for us under the head, "The Metric System." Here, too, we are once more brought face to face with the "Mother of Progress," in the person of la belle France; catch a passing glimpse of the cynical, sardonic Talleyrand under one of the more pleasant aspects of his character, the thoughtful and astute statesman, and are obliged to confess that the isolation of England has sometimes deserved the qualification stupid, rather than that which we so often and so proudly render it, "splendid."

Extremely practical and to the point is the information we get under the head, "Inconvenience of British Coinage." How well we all remember the heart-burnings occasioned by those dreadful "Pounds, Shillings and Pence Tables," and how gladly we welcome any change that will not only benefit commercial intercommunication, but take that load off the shoulders of the generations yet unborn.

The work given under the head "Proposed Changes in British Currency," is so valuable (as showing a working system), that did space permit we should quote it entire; as it is, we cannot refrain from submitting the author's "suggestions":—

"To us who have glided with such ease into the use of decimal moneys, it seems that the people of Great Britain are unduly conservative, for the changes needed are very simple. Applying a nomenclature merely by way of respectful suggestion, the table would be:—

£1—10 florins,
1 florin—10 dismes,
1 disme—10 doits.

The doit or mil would be a trifle below the value of the present farthing, 1,000 going to the £ instead of 960. Opponents of decimalisation for England say a farthing is a very important coin, but to us it seems too trifling to create concern in actual transactions over the counter, while as value in account the mil is rather more useful, and very much easier to deal with. The English would certainly regret the penny, but even that name would probably be restored with a new value, as soon as the old coinage had gone out of circulation. The new coinage would require:—

Value.	Name.	Multiple of the mille.
1,000,	the sovereign.....	1,00 mills.
.500,	the half sovereign.....	500 "
.100,	the florin...	100 "
.050,	the shilling, or semi-florin	50 "
.010,	the disme or tenner.....	10 "
.005,	the new penny.....	5 "
.001,	the doit.....	1 "

In all seven pieces, three only being new. The first two would be of gold, the next three of silver, the last two of bronze. A short period of confusion would ensue, in respect of the lower orders, which give rise, it is true, to the most numerous transactions, but its endurance should be rendered easier by the conviction that the reform would benefit untold future generations."

Under the head, "Need for Britain to Adopt the Metric System," Mr. Harvey shows the disadvantage under which England labors in the markets of the world, and incidentally the disadvantages under which we labor, she being one of our chief customers, by clinging to antiquated methods and complicated systems of weights and measures, when we have but to put out a hand and take the arrangement France introduced to the notice of the world, an arrangement in which not only is the easy gradations of "tens' ployed, but in which the units of lengths, superficies solidity and weight are simplified and correlated. The United States is shown to be already moving in the matter of a change, while in Canada the metric system, though legalized, is not yet, owing to the sluggishnes of England, practical.

Under the headings "Decimalisation of the Arc" and "Decimal Division of Time" is pointed out the inestimable advantage of such methods in regard to the construction of marine charts, in geographic surveys, in the study of the structure of the earth's surface, its grand features of mountains, valleys, etc, and in the convenience which would accrue from a more thoroughly harmonized and regular system of time-keeping the world over.

The essay closes with an appendix showing the experience which Austria, Hungary, Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Switzerland and a score more other European countries have had with the metric system, and their (with but trifling differences) unanimity of opinion as to its superiority over ancient processes.

The pamphlet comes from the press of Hunter, Rose & Co., and is entered as "The First Anglo-Keltic Work for the Twentieth Century." F.