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Money and the Taxing Power

BY W. H. ASHBY.

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CHAPTER VI.

In dealing with extension in space we are driven to adopt a similar device. Owing to the continuity of space it has no natural divisions capable of forming a standard unit, and so the hand, the foot, the arm, have been adopted as appliances by the use of which to ascertain quantity of extension. But the device created to express the quantity of extension when ascertained, is a word chosen to stand as the symbol of a fixed quantity of extension, arbitrarily adopted as the standard unit; and because it is impossible to deal with extension itself, we deal with the symbol as if it were extension. The word chosen in many cases was originally the name of the appliance, as "hand," "foot," etc.

But it is to be noted that the term used does not stand as the symbol of the appliance, but is the symbol of a fixed quantity of extension in space. "Hand" and "foot" when used to designate those organs of the human body, stand for things of variable length; but used as a symbol to express quantity of linear extension, they are constant.

We have a number of these terms, symbolizing different fixed quantities of extension in space, as inches, feet, yards, chains, miles, acres, etc. The word "yard" is not the symbol of the implement employed to ascertain quantity of length, which has been taken as a standard unit; but is the symbol of the fixed and changeless quantity of linear extension in space through which a yardstick is approximately capable of extending. The yardstick may vary in length under changing conditions, or become worn short by use; but neither the fixed quantity of extension in space, chosen as the unit, nor the word "yard," which stands as its symbol, can ever vary. Here also, because of the impossibility of dealing with abstract extension, the term chosen as the symbol becomes itself the standard unit of linear extension in space; and, aiding it with the numerals, we use it to express any required quantity of extension in space.

Its merit is that it expresses a fixed and changeless standard unit, which enables us to express any required quantity of extension in space, by saying it is such a multiple, or such a fractional part, of that fixed quantity of extension in space symbolized by the term "yard," thus adopted.

The same conditions require the creation of analogous devices in order to deal with the various modes of manifestation of Force. The number of these devices has increased as investigation has disclosed new modes of manifestation of force. Gravitation has been long recognized, and systems of weights have come down to us from remote times. On the other hand, no devices for expressing quantity of light, heat, sound, electricity, etc., were known to the ancients, because these were either not recognized as modes of force or were completely unknown.

The framers of the constitution of the United States unwittingly disclose the ignorance of the age in which they lived, by the provision for fixing the "standard of weights and measures," thus ignoring all except gravitation, space and time. Gravitation is the only mode of force, whose quantity is expressed in a term of "weight." The

"degree" of heat; the "horse-power" of steam; the "candle-power" of light; the "volt" of electrical force were not provided for in that instrument, for the reason that the necessity for them was unknown to its framers.

No eye has seen a "volt," and all that can be said of it is, that it is a "volt." It cannot be expressed by the term of "weight;" neither can it be expressed by the terms of linear, square or cubic measures. If we direct our attention to the mode of force called gravitation, we observe that its specific effect we call "weight." Weight is the form of our apprehension of the action of gravitation on ponderable bodies. When we attempt to deal with weight, we are compelled to adopt a device by means of which to express quantity of the force of gravitation, which to us, when "weighed" is weight found present in any given case.

A fixed and unvarying quantity of the force of gravitation, thus apprehended as weight, has been chosen and has had applied to it the name or term, "pound;" and that word has become the symbol of the quantity of "weight" chosen as the standard unit of weight. Because it is impossible to deal with the quantity of weight (thus arbitrarily chosen) in itself, the word which stands as the symbol of the chosen quantity of weight is dealt with as if it were itself a fixed quantity of the force of gravitation; and by means of the symbol so chosen, aided by the numerals, we express every quantity of weight, as such a fractional part of, or so many times the standard quantity taken as the unit, and for which the symbol stands.

Now, it must be borne in mind that we are not here considering the various appliances or instruments used to ascertain quantity of the mode of force at any time in question, or of the quantity of extension in space or duration in time. We are considering that which makes the use of appliances intelligible, by affording a device by means of which to express or utter a fixed and determinate quantity of each. In every instance the quantity of force, of extension, or of duration, which is taken as a basis or "standard unit," is symbolized by a word or term, which stands always for a fixed quantity of that which it symbolizes; and all comparisons are made with this standard unit, aided by the numerals. In every case the quantity under investigation is necessarily either equal to, or a multiple of, or a fractional part of the fixed quantity symbolized.

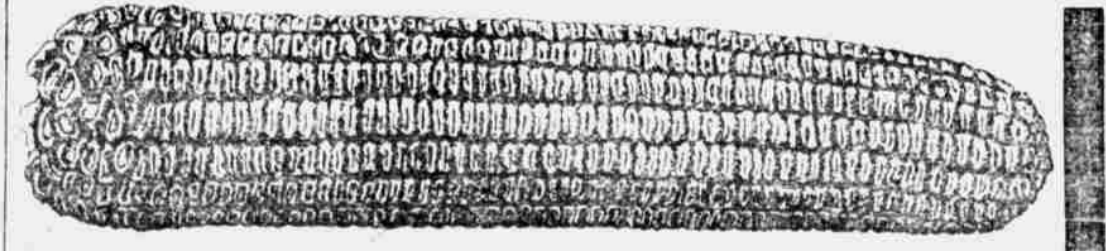
Thus we express mathematically how many times greater than the standard unit the quantity under investigation is, or that it is equal to it, or how many times less than that standard unit it is; but we never can know absolutely how great a quantity that standard unit is—because the nature of human intelligence precludes absolute knowledge of anything. Compared with a greater quantity, the quantity symbolized as the standard unit is small; compared with smaller quantity, it is great. A yard, an acre, a day, a pound, a horse-power, a volt, each symbolizes a quantity of extension, duration, or force, that can be expressed by the use of the chosen symbol—and cannot otherwise be uttered.

(Continued Next Week.)

The milling trust has sent out notices announcing 10 per cent advance in flour with an intimation that another rise in price may be soon expected. That is fulfilling The Independent's prediction ahead of time. If coal can be handled to suit the trust, why not flour. The Independent asked, but it predicated such action on a short crop. The milling trust didn't wait for a short crop.

Edmond Thery and Yves Guyot, two French economists, in 1897 bet a dinner on the prices of silver and gold by the end of 1902. They believed a kilogram of gold would be equal in value to sixteen kilograms of silver the world over—and of course lost. The dinner was given at Durand's restaurant, Paris, a day or two ago. Frederic Passay, Sir Donald Wallace, and Molinari Caillaux, were among the guests. A lively debate ensued.

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