

of a part of the rim of a crater in existence before the construction of the present cone.

The map shown in connection with the paper was prepared by M. Léon Leboucher for the Club des Montagnards of Guadeloupe. This club has recently celebrated the first anniversary of its founding, and its report shows that it has done a great deal in a short time toward the opening up of roads and paths to the Soufrière, making the highest and one of the most interesting mountains of the Lesser Antilles readily accessible to visitors.

EDMUND OTIS HOVEY,
Secretary.

DISCUSSION AND CORRESPONDENCE.

THE METRIC SYSTEM.

TO THE EDITOR OF SCIENCE: Permit me to differ from Mr. William Kent as to the conclusion to be drawn from Professor W. Le Conte Stevens's article on the metric system. If he will substitute for the word 'impossibility' the word 'possibility' I shall be glad to agree that Professor Stevens's 'article is useful, however, in showing the possibility of the general adoption of the metric system in its present form by the people of this country.' There seems to be every probability that one will not have to live to be very old in order to see by experience this possibility become a fact, in this country as well as in England, which now seems likely to precede us in this reform, as she has in various political ones. I can not share the desire of Professors Lane and Stevens to temper the metric system to the conservatism of the American people by adopting its values disguised in the sheep's clothing of the present non-system. I believe that the intelligence of our people is not insufficient to enable them to drink their milk by the liter with as much gusto as by the quart, and to realize that six cents a liter is six dollars a hectoliter, even if a Greek prefix is involved. It takes a bold man to assert that the American people can not do what the French and Germans have done, and that they will not be able to see the advantage of it. If 'the people can not be compelled to adopt a nomenclature that is thrust upon them as a substitute for that to which they have always

been accustomed' we should have no decimal system of currency to-day, for the people were very much accustomed to pounds, shillings and pence, but seem to have been willing to be compelled to adopt dollars and cents (what an outrageous, foreign, difficult Latin word!), and in fact, seem even to prefer them. Is the inch more sacred than the pound? The engineer will reply, yes, and here we come to the kernel of the whole matter. It is the mechanical engineers and builders of machine tools who are delaying the adoption of the metric system. Now, while these persons constitute a very important part of the community, they do not constitute the whole of it. Drills, taps and dies, rigs and jigs are not the only argument that should be brought into the question, although engineers would have us believe it. Of course, it will cost us something to change our system, and this is a visible item. It is costing us more not to change it, but this is not so visible. I do not care to go into the arguments here, but merely to protest against the argument from conservatism, and also to suggest that the best way to find out the facts about the metric system is to apply, not to the engineers, who have not used it, but to the scientific men who have used it. The attitude of the conservative engineer toward changing the system of measurement is very similar to that of Cæsar toward the Senate: 'Can not is false, and that I dare not, falsus; I *will* not' change.

ARTHUR GORDON WEBSTER.

ZOOLOGY AND THE INTERNATIONAL CATALOGUE OF SCIENTIFIC LITERATURE.*

This work has just come into my hands and I have examined it for references on the subject to which most of my attention is given, viz., Cœlenterata. The data given below will indicate the value of the catalogue, so far as Cœlenterata are concerned, in comparison with two other well-known bibliographic undertakings, the 'Bibliographia universalis' of the Concilium Bibliographicum and the *Zoological Record*.

For the year 1901, the Concilium Biblio-

* 'The International Catalogue of Scientific Literature.' First Annual Issue, N, Zoology [for the year 1901]: 1904 (February).