September 24, 1940

Dear Fairfield Smith,

Many thanks for your letter of July 14th with the stamps, which are very greatly appreciated. I had thought that the French word milliard for $10^9$ had been successful in stabilising the correct use of billion for $10^{12}$ in that country — apart, of course, from its journalistic use as a sensational exaggeration. I suppose you are right that Dutch and French writers used it for $10^9$ in the 17th century, but unless this was done by critical writers, and not only on occasions when they might be relenting towards a popular usage, I doubt if this should be used as an argument for what has become quite a troublesome ambiguity in English speech.

It is, of course, for Americans to choose which usage should be thought proper in that country, having regard, of course, for the convenience of international uniformity in respect of scientific terms.

Yours sincerely,