

practical utility is unimpaired by such mishaps ; and should it be really damaged or lost, public opinion readily transfers the same reverence to its legitimate successor.

(8.) The history of our existing "Imperial" standard is not quite so simple. It is the successor of one destroyed by fire in 1834: not, however, being copied or even having been immediately compared with its predecessor ; but recovered by the evidence of an assemblage of other standards which had, at various times, been compared with that and with each other. And that again had been derived, not by direct copying and exact equalizing with *its* predecessor the then "reputed Exchequer Standard," but by a somewhat similar process, from all the best evidence that could be procured of a former state of things. The ultimate prototype is either to be referred to the age of Henry I., who is said "to have settled the yard by the length of his own arm," or to the more ancient foot of twelve inches, "each the length of three barleycorns from the middle of the ear, laid end to end." The point is not of the slightest importance, now that we are assured from the number and exactness of the copies taken ; their wide distribution ; and the precautions taken to ensure their preservation ; that it is scarcely in the power of accident to deprive us of a perfectly "legitimate" successor in the sense in which we have above used the term.

(9.) To measure lengths of many miles (to say nothing of the breadth of a country or of a kingdom), by the simple repetition and laying end to end of yard measures (supposed exactly equal), would not only be intolerably