

weights, and coinage generally. And to such it will not be amiss to observe in the outset that, the subject being an exceedingly delicate and refined one, they must not be surprised at seeing very minute quantities and very small fractions treated as matters of much greater importance than they may have been accustomed to regard them.

(2.) The general subject of a national system of weights and measures, be it observed, divides itself into two very distinct and separate points of inquiry, viz.: first, What is intrinsically the best and most available unit of linear measure to adopt as a basis: and, secondly, what system of numerical multiplication and aliquot sub-division of such unit for measures of length, and of its derivative units of area, of capacity, and of weight (for these all refer themselves naturally and easily to the unit of linear measure, or at least ought to do so) is most advantageous—either in a great mercantile community like our own, or for the great mass of mankind in the ordinary transactions of life. And it cannot be too strongly impressed, and too perseveringly borne in mind, that these two questions stand in no natural and necessary relation to each other, but are perfectly independent. We may resolve, with perfect logical consistency, either to toss aside our present system *in toto*, and adopt the metrical one in preference; or to retain our fundamental unit (the Imperial foot or yard), and decimalize our system of denominations; or, lastly, by a slight, and, practically speaking, imperceptible change in our present standard, to bring it into conformity with our views of