

The passage of this resolution by the Colonial Conference must be regarded as an important step towards the general adoption of the metric system throughout the Empire, but, of course, none of the governments are actually committed to doing anything more than giving the question due consideration. Naturally, the Dominion Government will not feel like making so radical a change in the national system of weights and measures without consulting the views of the people who will be affected by it. The change is one that must come sooner or later; it is only a question of sooner or later. It is intensely characteristic of British conservatism that the Mother Country and the colonies should have clung to a clumsy and unscientific system of weights and measures so many years after the invention of something better. For sixty-two years the use of a pure decimal system has been compulsory in France. The system was formally proposed to the French National Assembly in 1791 and the meridian measurements, which are the basis of the system, were completed in 1799. For some years the use of the metric system in France was permissive only, but in 1840 it was made compulsory. Obviously, the only practical way to make a change of this nature is by compulsory legislation. The use of the metric system in Canada has been permissive for many years and to-day probably not one Canadian in a hundred knows the length of a metre.

Some time ago in an article on this subject we showed how varied were the weights and measures in use in the old land, and what difficulties arose from the prevalence of such confusion. But, as these weights and measures have been in use in England for centuries and as some of them are most convenient for both sellers and buyers, it will be a difficult task to displace them.

All old weights and measures are based upon the simplest of all divisions, which is dividing the unit into two parts, that is halving it. The radical division by two leads to division by 4, 8 and so on, to which forms the people will tenaciously adhere. Even in France, where the legal weights and measures are metric, the retail dealers adopt the plan of dividing goods by 2, 4 and so on, as these divisions are far more convenient in small transactions than dividing by 5 or by 10. Even scientists in France have found it necessary to recognize this system as supplementary to the metric. Sir Frederic Bramwell, ex-president of the Civil Engineers' Institute of Great Britain, has published some remarks on this subject, in which he shows the great utility of having measures in which the division is by halves and so on.

As to the greater convenience of a decimal cur-

rency there is no question; Canada once had the cumbersome pounds, shillings and pence system and abolished it, for which we are all thankful. Were Great Britain to come into line it would be such a very great relief to all who have to make calculations and to keep accounts that they would wonder the old £ s d plan was kept up so long.

The experience of the people of Canada of the decimal system of currency ought to go a great way towards reconciling them to the temporary inconvenience that a similar change in weights and measures would involve. Boards of trade and newspapers might do good service in educating the community upon this question and in enabling the Government to form an opinion as to how the proposition will be received in the country. If it is possible to bring about the adoption of the metric system simultaneously throughout the Empire, the greatest step will have been taken towards making it of universal application throughout the civilized world.

#### PROMINENT TOPICS.

Thanksgiving Day was observed, more or less throughout Canada in, we trust the spirit befitting a national recognition of the bounties poured by Providence on the people of this Dominion, who, above all others, have reason for gratitude to the Giver of all good. There is not a country under the sun wherein greater contentment prevails than in Canada; or, where peace is more assured; where a higher standard of health can be maintained; where poverty is more restricted; where the course is so open to material advancement; where the resources for the future development of trade and the acquisition of wealth are so munificent; where there is a higher standard of social purity observed, or where there is so universal an observance of these obligations which rest upon a Christian nation. It was, therefore, eminently meet and right and the bounden duty of this Dominion to thankfully recognize the divine source of all its privileges and blessings.

The coal strike situation seems drawing towards a crisis, and a settlement we trust will have been reached before this issue reaches our subscribers. It is worthy of going upon record that, both in this city and in Toronto several wealthy citizens have contributed large funds to provide fuel for the poor, or, placed extensive stores of wood at the disposal of the authorities for distribution to the needy. The Federal Government also is entitled to credit for offering to transport coal over the Government lines free of charge. Such acts of munificence and of sympathetic consideration for those to whom a fuel famine means acute distress are honourable to this country.