

commences, the pennies and halfpence continued to be uncomfortably heavy, and the king's ungainly effigy looked uneasy on the clumsy disc. The farthings probably were about the size of our present halfpence, but tradespeople readily received them in payment, because the silver coin was so scandalously deteriorated that it was often difficult to make out whether you possessed shillings and sixpences, or merely pieces of hammered tin.

One expedient to ameliorate the coinage was to stamp some Spanish Dollars, captured in a naval engagement, with a miniature die of the sovereign, and with that addenda they were circulated as tokens first at a value of 4s. 9d. each, and ultimately at 5s. A second plan was to issue silver tokens at a value of 1s. 6d. and 3s., but no attempt was made to substitute anything more satisfactory for the worn-out or spurious shillings and sixpences, which had become a positive nuisance. To add to the annoyance, during the long war, nearly all the great towns, and many of the chief manufacturing firms, coined copper money for themselves. This, it was alleged, was only a medium for the payment of workmen, and the restricted wants of the township. But how restrain it within such narrow limits? The whole country was quickly deluged with this unauthorized coin, while Ireland, eagerly seizing the example set up her copper mint; and few things were more troublesome than to distinguish between genuine and spurious copper money. During the Regency, and in the reign of George IV., the debased coin gradually disappeared, and some of the new coins, especially a five-shilling piece (never much circulated), were very beautiful. The pence, halfpence, and farthings grew perceptibly lighter, but in other respects were not improved. William IV. did not alter the coinage to any great extent, and the pieces we now occasionally handle—sovereigns and half-sovereigns being the most common—certainly have no pretence to elegance. Her present Majesty has nearly engrossed the