

gain his half cent additional profit by making out his bill in currency instead of in dollars and cents, in consequence of the impossibility of making even cents out of the odd ninepence currency.

Half a cent is but an infinitesimal fraction over a farthing ; but I am told that many tradesmen make a good thing out of the farthings in change which " genteel " customers contemptuously refuse to trouble themselves with ; and so do the " cute " traders out of the half cents they continue to squeeze out of those customers who are not up to the trick, and who do not insist upon their bills being rendered in legitimate dollars and cents. Up to 1852-3 this currency annoyance was rendered more annoying and perplexing in consequence of the practice that prevailed throughout the States of taking or giving in change, over the counter, Spanish quarter dollars, and pistareens and French francs and half-francs, and German florins and guilders, and English half-crowns, shillings, and sixpences, as well as lesser silver coins ; in fact, the current coins of all nations, at a certain specified valuation, which could be found by referring to the " Bank Bill Directories." The specified value of these foreign coins was, however, liable to depreciation, accordingly as the coins were worn or dilapidated ; and the value of worn or dilapidated foreign coins was determined at the will or caprice of any person who chose to consider that they had done duty at their specified value long enough. All that was necessary in such case was to scratch a cross diagonally on the face of the coin, when it immediately diminished in value. For instance, I have taken in change, at the rate of twenty-five cents, a Spanish or Mexican quarter dollar, perhaps worn so smooth that the device upon its face is scarcely distinguishable. I enter a shop, or " store " and make a purchase, and tender in payment, among other change, my smooth Spanish quarter. The shopkeeper happens to be in a bad humor, or from some cause or another he is unusually sharp. He