

posed to interruption in case of war with any naval power, the practical point to be decided is whether the canals shall be thoroughly renovated, or whether a new means of communication shall be provided through the instrumentality of a railway. Arguments can be brought forward for both suggestions, but the strongest of all arguments is in favor of the latter—viz., that the foreigner will lend his money for that object, but not for repairing and cleaning out the great canals constructed by Yangti and other emperors of the past.

We need not discuss the prospects of such lines as these in any close detail at the present moment, when no surveys have been made. Only a few general observations can be made with safety. Tien-Tsin is about 80 miles from Peking, and as both of those towns are places of great commercial activity, as well as large population, there can be little or no doubt that a railway between them would prove a very remunerative undertaking, so long as the Government bestowed upon it countenance and protection. The second line would also pass through well-peopled provinces, and several large towns, such as Tsang, Liu-Tsing, Tsec-Nan, &c., and along a recognized trade route. It would have what may be considered the additional advantage of traversing a part of China which has not maintained its earlier high state of prosperity, and which may therefore be deemed susceptible of greater improvement than those districts which are admittedly well cultivated and the centers of a flourishing trade. On the other hand, it would be a much more serious and costly undertaking than a line from Tien-Tsin to Peking. Its mere length would not be less than 600 miles, and probably might be nearer 700 miles, and the Government might have some difficulty in securing for it the respect from the people, which is one of the first essentials if the support and sympathy of Europeans are to be enlisted in the undertaking. Moreover, this line would always have, in time of peace, to reckon with the active competition of the sea route.

The real stumbling block which has to be removed before any of these designs will be realized, is one of sentiment. The Chinese are loth to begin any of these railways, because they conceive that they will benefit foreigners more than themselves. What has to be done is to convince them of the contrary, and this can only be accomplished by selecting a quarter for the first railway where foreign trade is small and Chinese traffic great. As the Chinese Government intend to treat these lines as State railways, the very best undertaking to convince the Chinese of our unselfish desire for the introduction of railways into their empire would, perhaps, be the construction of a strategical line from Peking to Mookden, the capital of Manchiaroo. Its advantages would, no doubt, be military and political, rather than commercial, but they are sufficiently obvious, and the Marquis Tseng would confer a material favor on his country if, on his return to China, he were to advocate such a project. It would certainly have the one great recommendation that it could not be attributed to the selfish purposes of Europeans.—*Banker's Magazine*.

A British Tariff.

A cablegram on Wednesday stated that the English Cabinet had reached a decision on the tariff question. A bill is to be prepared for introduction into Parliament, authorizing the imposition of duties on imports into Great Britain from countries imposing duties on imports from Great Britain. The measure will be founded on the report of Lord Idlesleigh's commission on trade, which finds, first, that English depression is due primarily, to foreign competition, and disposes of the previously accepted doctrine of exceptional causes, such as temporary overstocking; second, that successful foreign competition results from a fiscal policy prohibitive of imports on English products; third, that the rise of rents and necessaries is proportionally greater than that of wages, the standard of wages being kept low by the effects on British industries of foreign competition; fourth, that wide distress prevails in the manufacturing districts, resulting from dearth of employment and inadequate wages for those who are employed.—*Journal of Fabrics*.

Recent Legal Decisions.

STATUTE OF FRAUDS—CONSIDERATION—SURETY.—The Superior Court of Kennedy held, in the case of Spurrier vs. Nottingham, decided on the 16th ult., that the assumption of liability as surety was a sufficient consideration for the promise of another to save the surety harmless, and that a promise to save one harmless if he would become the surety of another was not such as was required by the Statute of Frauds to be in writing.

INSURANCE—AGENT—NOTICE.—An agent was employed to secure certain insurance, which he did. Afterwards the insurance company gave notice to the agent of the cancellation of the policy. The General Term of the New York Supreme Court held (*Von Wien vs. The Scottish Union & National Insurance Company*) that the notice so given was not notice to the insured, and that a clause in the policy to the effect that the insurance broker should be deemed to be the agent of the insured in any transaction relating to the insurance did not effect the question.

GARNISHMENT—GENERAL WAIVER OF EXEMPTION.—The Supreme Court of Georgia recently declared void a general waiver made by a labourer in a note in the following form, viz.: "I hereby contract and expressly waive the exemption of my wages or salary from the process of garnishment under the laws of Georgia, or the exemption of my daily, weekly, monthly or yearly wages or salary from the operation of the garnishment law, in case this note is not paid promptly at maturity." *Green vs. Watson*, decided on the 16th ult. The court did not decide whether a special waiver of the exemption as to certain employment and for a certain time by specific employers containing such specific waiver would be good.

CUSTOMS LAW DECISION—DUTY ON MERINO GOODS.—The case of Greenleaf et al vs. Worthington, decided by Judge Colt in the United States Circuit Court at Boston on the 2nd ult., was an action to recover back an excess of duties levied by the defendant as collector upon

merino shirts, drawers and hosiery, imported by the plaintiffs. Duty was assessed by the government upon the merino goods imported by the plaintiffs as if they were wool, on the ground that merino is chiefly composed of wool. The plaintiffs contended that merino is, in a commercial sense, a distinct article from wool, and should not be assessed at wool rates. The court decided in favor of the plaintiffs. Colt J., said: "It appears that the importations were known in trade in 1874 as merino shirts, drawers, socks and stockings, and that the yarn was known in trade as merino yarn, and that this yarn was produced by carding together wool and cotton and spinning, by which process a distinct article of commerce from either wool or cotton is produced, which is known and described as merino. The importations being composed in part of wool and in part of cotton, and known commercially as merino, we do not think they should be assessed.—*Broadstreets*."

A Soft Wheat Craze.

In every community there is some genius whose mission is to show that the part is greater than the whole, that the lesser involves the greater, and so forth, and he is busy at present in Manitoba endeavoring to persuade the farmers of that Province to extend the cultivation of White Russian or other soft spring wheat at the expense of the Red Fife. The idea is that White Russian will sell for nearly as much as the Red Fife and that it grows fifteen bushels to the acre more than the other. The truth, however, as opposed to the idea is that it won't and doesn't. It may be a few days earlier; but, unless unduly delayed, the Red Fife ripens early enough to escape any frost that would spare White Russian, and in the very unusual event of damage by early frost the Fife wheat frozen is worth as much as the other untouched. The latter, if frozen, is unmarketable. It is also more liable to blight and smut. It will not clear like the other, and is in every way inferior. If farmers wish to damage the reputation of the Province, send immigration elsewhere, and generally destroy the enviable reputation they have acquired, they will discard the hard and adopt the soft wheat; if they don't they won't. The experiment has been tried in Minnesota and it failed. Those who tried it wish they had not and are getting back to former lines as quickly as they can.—*Montreal Herald*.

The Business Outlook.

During the three months from August until November last, says the *New York Sun*, there was for the first time since 1881 a distinct though very moderate improvement in business throughout the United States. For four years following the boom of 1879, '80, and '81, the distribution of merchandise gradually declined. During 1883 this began to be conspicuous, even to the casual observer. In 1884 it came home to everybody. Prices of staple commodities continued their downward career, however, and 1885 was ushered in to long faces and lean purses. Analyses of the past four years of depression in trade have been frequent enough of late to be unnecessary now. It remains to be