

## INTERNATIONAL COPYRIGHT.

This subject, which has been often discussed in different countries, particularly in England and the United States, is assuming a definite shape in the country last named. A plan of dealing with the question is being matured in Washington, and it is said that strong efforts will be made to have placed on the statute book during the coming session, a law providing for international copyright, to be secured by treaties with foreign powers with supplementary legislation, similar to that which gave effect to the provisions of the Treaty of Reciprocity. The proposal is to enact a law by which authors who are citizens or subjects of other countries may assign to an American publisher their copyright in a book, provided the government of their country extends the same right to American authors. True to the protective spirit of all American legislation, it is proposed that to secure this privilege for a book written by a foreigner, it must be printed and bound within the United States. Foreign publications attempting to evade this copyright Act, are to be seized at any port of entry where an attempt is made to introduce them. It is intended that the law shall also cover dramatic and operatic compositions, which may be assigned within six months after their first production. It is to be hoped that the present attempt will not fail, as so many former ones have done. The subject is one urgently demanding an equitable adjustment, and there is no reason in justice why a mutual understanding should not be reached on the subject of international copyright between all civilized nations. We wish the new movement the success it deserves.

## DISTRIBUTION OF ASSETS.

The Speech from the Throne contains no promise of legislation, so far as the Government is concerned, on the general subject of distribution of assets of insolvent debtors. The only reference is to the winding up of insolvent corporate companies. It is more than likely that before the Session closes, a bill may be brought in by Mr. Abbott or some other member, providing for the ratable distribution of insolvents' assets. The Government is, however, blamable, we think, for leaving the subject to be dealt with in this way. It is of sufficient importance to warrant the government assuming the responsibility of any measure introduced. If a government measure is not to be carried, the next best thing will be to have a good bill from some other source, brought before the attention of the house. This we trust will be done. Largely signed petitions

from Montreal wholesale men have already been presented to the House, asking for such a law, and there can be no doubt whatever of the feeling of the mercantile community throughout the country on the subject. In fact the justice of a rateable distribution of the assets of insolvent debtors is so reasonable, that there can be no excuse for allowing the matter to remain any longer in its present state in nearly all the Provinces of the Dominion.

—The City council is not so readily disposed to wink at the systematic violation of law by the Toronto Street Railway Company as the Committee on Works is, and it sent back the report to the committee. Ald. Morris showed that the company by its charter, is required to have a conductor in each car, who is to call the names of the streets as they are crossed, and to provide a seat for every one who pays fare. On some cars there are no conductors, and the rule is that the names of streets are not called. Should the committee again fail in its duty, perhaps the Council can act in spite of the committee. But failing any relief from the Council, there are still two remedies that may be pursued. Any citizen who goes on a car can refuse to pay his fare unless provided with a seat. In that case, if the company ventured to put him off the car, he would have his remedy at law. People do not want to go to the trouble of seeking their rights in this way; but a number of persons can join together in the effort. The second remedy is the best. It consists of an opposition company with improved appliances. It is not likely that the old company will care for any remedy short of this.

—The figures relating to the lumber trade of the St. Lawrence with South American ports, for the season just closed, have been published. They show that the total shipments of sawn lumber were 10,286,184 feet, four-fifths of which quantity was sent from Montreal. It was expected that a heavier business would have been done during the season, but the trouble between Chili and Peru has had a depressing effect upon trade; and though the above figures are on a par with those of recent years, they do not compare in amount with the operations of the earlier years of the decade just closing. In 1872 and 1873 the shipments were twenty-eight million, and thirty-six million respectively.

## LOSSES BY DISCOUNT ON CHEQUES.

"If you owe me for a pair of kid gloves bought last January," said a Hamilton merchant to a customer in Brant county, "do you suppose I

can afford, ten months after, to take your cheque—less 25c. for collection—in full payment? What kind of profit do you suppose we make on kid gloves, and what about interest on the money? Do you not see that this tax on the cheque means a loss of 14 per cent to me? I only wish such profits could be got nowadays." The injustice of the system of paying small bills due in one place, by bank cheque payable in another, and on which a fee is charged for the cashing, is palpable, but many merchants have long submitted to it, rather than make a noise on the subject, and so, possibly, offend their customers. A subscriber, writing from Montreal a few days ago, begs us to urge upon the mercantile community the consideration of some means whereby this annoying and depleting practice may be stopped. He says:—

"The evil is a crying one with us. We are mulcted in the sum of 25 cents, by many country customers, and city ones too, even Toronto people, who seem to consider that they pay us quite sufficiently if they give the face value of the account payable by their cheque, with the inevitable discount. When one has 75 or 100 small accounts due quarterly or perhaps monthly, ranging from \$5 to \$25, the loss of the discount on cheques becomes a serious matter. It is not agreeable even in large accounts, and in the case of these, we have preferred to 'grin and bear it' rather than make a row. But when in small accounts it cuts off from one to five per cent. of our precarious enough profit, we must remonstrate."

Probably the real reason that most of the payments here described, and those which scores and hundreds of other merchants might describe and complain of, are made by cheque, is that it is the most simple and convenient mode; it is a safeguard to the sender and its injustice to the receiver is made light of. To buy an extra stamp, and procure a certificate for a registered letter, takes time and trouble, and costs two cents besides. And, after all, the purchaser has no receipt for his money. These cents may be saved, the remitter thinks, by writing a cheque. Then to buy a money order is also tedious, so he makes the city merchants offer by sending him what is in reality a short remittance, *per* cheque. What is the cure for this state of things? One occasionally sees, printed on cheques: "No charge for cashing these cheques at any office of the bank." Why cannot such arrangement be made general? Why, it is asked, should not the amount charged by a bank for cashing a cheque bear some proportion to its amount, since it appears absurd to charge as much for cashing a \$4 cheque as for one of \$94. The reason, a banker will reply, is that it is as troublesome to pass a four dollar cheque through his books, as one of four thousand, and he is therefore in no hurry to encourage remittances by small cheques. And, as to the arrangement for cashing them without charge, no bank does that, which has not some compensating advantage in the extent or nature of the account of the customer for whom it is done.

We find in an American exchange the following remarks as to the need of some more convenient method of sending small sums of money through the mails:—