

UNDER a decision recently rendered by the Supreme Court of the U. S., importers will be entitled to receive back about \$6,000,000 on duties illegally exacted by the Government. The question involved was, according to the Washington correspondent of the N. Y. *Bulletin*, whether ribbons composed of silk and cotton, in which silk is the component material of chief value, the articles being used exclusively for hat trimmings, and having commercial value for that purpose only, are dutiable at 50 per cent. *ad valorem* as goods not specially enumerated, of which silk is the component material of chief value, or at 20 per cent. under the tariff provision for hat trimmings. The collector assessed duty at 50 per cent., the importer claiming that 20 per cent. was the proper rate of duty.

—It is announced that the Queen has conferred the honor of knighthood upon Mr. Joseph Hickson, General Manager of the Grand Trunk Railway. The announcement will be received with general approval. Sir Joseph Hickson is a man of very large railway experience. His long connection with the Grand Trunk road, and the marked ability which he has shown in dealing with its varied affairs, entitle him to be called a representative railway man.

—The Bank of Nova Scotia declares a dividend for the half-year now current at the rate of seven per cent. per annum.

—A half-yearly dividend of three per cent. has been declared by the Merchants' Bank of Halifax.

—The Bank of New Brunswick has announced a semi-annual dividend of six per cent.

Correspondence.

MUNICIPAL MANAGEMENT.

Editor MONETARY TIMES:

SIR,—The re-election of Ald. Carlyle (St. Thomas), who has been the chairman of the Committee on Works, will not, it is to be hoped, place him again at the head of that very important committee. During the last two years there has been an enormous extension in the responsibilities and expenditure of the Works department. The expenditure exceeds that of the Works departments of both the Federal and Provincial Governments in this province. Ald. Carlyle has shown himself to be unfit to occupy the important and onerous position of chairman of the Works Committee; the department is notorious for its want of management, system, and organization.

The reconstruction of the "Works department" has been promised *ad nauseam*; the mayor must be as tired of apologizing for its chairman as the public are of hearing of his "honesty," which appears to be a singular quality in an alderman, as so much is made of it. A department controlling an expenditure of nearly \$1,000,000 per annum ought to be managed with a regularity and system which are sadly wanting under the present management. This is largely due to the interference of the members of the committee with the officials. When the chairman sets the example of making the offices generally a convenient lounging place, to which the head of the department weakly submits, there need be no surprise that the other members of the committee follow his example.

A chairman is now wanted of the calibre of last year's chairman of the Water Works Committee; it will be to the lasting benefit of the department and profit of the city could some chairman like Alderman Boustead be found.

The citizens would have cause for congratulation if that gentleman could be induced to take the chairmanship of the Works Committee. He has brought the Water Works department into a condition of perfect order, and he would deserve and would doubtless receive hearty support should he undertake to bring order out of the chaos which now exists in the Works department.

WATCHMAN.

A CLEVER MISTAKE.

To prevent mistakes in transmitting, the grain commission men have a well-established cipher in which words that are not liable to be mistaken by the telegraph operator are used in place of the quotation figures. Some of the Chicago firms use the cipher in corresponding with their out-of-town customers, and others do not, as the general run of customers are not familiar with the cipher.

A Hamilton man who is fond of speculating, was in Chicago a short time ago and made a large purchase of wheat with a leading commission house on a 4 per cent. margin. He requested the firm to telegraph him the quotations and a clerk was instructed to furnish him with a cipher key, but neglected to do so. He took the first train for home and on his arrival found a telegram awaiting him: "Opened, disgust."

He was somewhat surprised, and failed to make any sense out of the message. A little later he received another message:

"Disgusted."

A little later came another.

"Disgusting."

By this time he was getting mad, and sent back the following message:

"I should say it was disgusting. What do you mean?"

Before he had fairly got his answer on the wires there came another message:

"Disheartened."

So was the Hamilton man, so he waited and did not answer. But when another message came in "Dishonest," he sent back word: "I won't dispute it, I think you are crazy. Sell all my wheat at once."

Later he received a message:

"Sold just in time. Now disgorge."

To say that the Hamilton man was mad would be putting it mildly. He took the train that night for Chicago to see what it meant, and when he found out treated all around. Disgust translated is 99½ cents; disgusted, 99½ cents; disgusting, 100; disheartened, 100½; dishonest, 100½, and disgorge, 99½.—*Hamilton Herald*.

INTERESTING NAMES OF FABRICS.

Everything connected with one's business is of importance. Very few dry goods men know the origin of the names of many of the goods they handle. They may seem trivial points, but they are of interest to the man who seeks to be thoroughly familiar with the merchandise in which he deals. For the information of such we give the derivation of the names of the following goods: Damask is from the city of Damascus; calico, from Calicut, a town in India, formerly celebrated for its cotton cloth, and where calico was also printed. Muslin is named from Mosul, in Asia; alpaca from an animal in Peru, of the llama species, from whose wool the fabric is woven. Buckram takes its name from Fostat, a city of the Middle Ages, from which the modern Cairo is descended. Taffeta and tabby from a street in Bagdad; Cambric from Cambrai. Gauze has its name from Gaza; baize from Baiac; dimity from Damiatta and jeans from Jean. Drugget is derived from a city in Ireland, Drogheda. Duck comes from Torque, in Normandy. Blanket is called after Thomas Blanket, a famous clothier connected with the introduction of woollens into England about 1340. Serge derives its name from Xerga, a Spanish name for a peculiar woollen blanket. Diaper is not from D'Ypres, as it is sometimes stated, but from the Greek diaspron, figured. Velvet is from the Italian vellute, woolly (Latin vellus—a hide or pelt). Shawl is the Sanscrit sala, floor—for shawls were first used as carpets and tapestry. Bandanna is from an Indian word to bind or tie, because it is tied in knots before dyeing. Chintz from the Indian chott. Delaine is the French "of wool."—*Trade Journal*.

THE FREIGHT CAR FAMINE.

THE CAUSES OF ITS EXISTENCE—SHIPPERS SOMEWHAT TO BLAME.

The freight car shortage continues in the west, to the great embarrassment of railways and shippers, notwithstanding the fact that the terrible condition of the waggon roads in most sections, resulting from the open weather, has greatly diminished the hauling of grain from the farm to the station. If the ordinary winter weather, with hard waggon roads, had been experienced the glut of produce awaiting shipment would have been very much greater. Of course the disposition is to charge the present trouble to the negligence of the railways in providing sufficient equipment, but the number of new freight cars added during the last year seems to have more than kept pace with the increase in mileage, while the average capacity has continued to be greatly increased. According to Poor's Manual the number of freight cars in the United States at the end of 1888 was 1,005,116, which is at the rate of 6½ cars to every mile of line then reported, against an average of less than 5½ per mile in 1887, and shows an addition during the year of no less than 54,229 cars. Within the last five years the number of freight cars in the United States has been increased, according to the same authority, almost 226,500, and it should be remembered that during that time the maximum load per car has nearly doubled, showing that the railways as a whole have by no means been neglectful in furnishing increased accommodations for shippers. But it is doubtless true that a good many roads have not increased their equipment sufficiently and are now trying to supply the demand by stealing the cars of their connections. Complaints of appropriation of cars by roads not owning them are more numerous than ever, it would seem, and show the necessity of the general adoption and enforcement of rules in regard to payment of charges for detention by both railways and shippers. The fast freight lines also have suffered from the car famine by the forcible seizure in many cases of their cars by roads upon which they do not belong. Some western roads now refuse to allow their cars to go east on account of inability to get them home, which indicates that the eastern lines are to blame for some of the prevailing car detention. In fact the crowded condition of the trunk line terminals is evidence of a glut of freight which is not easily handled. The Wabash road is reported to be short nearly 4,000 cars altogether, and some 2,000 of these are said to have been lost in the east. One report says that trains have followed so closely upon each other with corn that there recently were at Baltimore 10,000 or more cars waiting to be unloaded, forming a blockade which it would take days to raise.

While shippers are loud in blaming the roads for an insufficient supply of cars they are themselves to a considerable extent responsible for the trouble by holding cars for loading and unloading. The principle of a demurrage charge for detention of equipment is just and its general and impartial enforcement would do much to prevent car famines by greatly increasing the mileage of the wheels in service, and moreover would at least enable the companies which have been liberal in providing cars to get the benefit of them for their own traffic instead of suffering while their cars are working for other lines. Competition, however, runs so high that each road dislikes to put the screws on its patrons in this respect for fear of diverting their business to competitors, and so the practical introduction of demurrage charges comes slowly.—*Railway Age*.

PRICES FOR OLD WINES.

The Skibo Castle cellar was sold at Edinburgh last Saturday, and the fame of these wines attracted a very large attendance. Port of 1844 realized £6 per dozen, and 90s. was paid for "51," which, in the opinion of many good judges, is the most perfect port wine now in existence. Lafitte of 1858 went at £8 per dozen, and £7 was paid for Latour of 1864, and £5 for Leoville of that year. Champagnes of 1874 averaged £8 per dozen, and some very old rum shrub, of superlative excellence, realized 8s. per bottle.—*London World*.