

majority of cases. Having special regard to the passenger boat, there is not the slightest reason why the long flights of cabins and saloons should not have more frequent subdivision, if only by means of non-inflammable, hard-wood bulkheads, than is usually effected by water-tight doors.

The primary safeguard against spread of fire in ships of all classes will be their division into the largest number of small fire risks consistent with the work of the ship, and this number can and should far exceed the number of divisions made in order to obtain water-tight compartments.

Turning next to the safeguards in the application of materials to the construction of vessels, I consider the reduction of combustible material to a practical minimum to be essential. For the passenger ship, however, in particular, I would go so far as to say that the reduction of the combustible material should be compulsory, and that, above all, the vast quantities of highly inflammable wooden partitions and fittings used on board our ocean greyhounds and excursion steamers should be absolutely condemned. There is not the slightest reason why wood should be used at all to the extent that it is at present, for with metal framing and the various forms of sheeting of a non-inflammable character (the component parts of which are, to a large extent, asbestos) a very considerable amount of the woodwork would, *ipso facto*, be banished, to the advantage of all concerned.

The "non-inflammability" of wood is a problem which, to my mind, has been solved commercially. I have gone into the matter most carefully, and base this finding, not only on English, but on American and Continental experience. Such tests as those before the British Fire Prevention Committee

#### QUERIES' COLUMN.

In order to furnish our readers with information we propose to devote this column to replies to correspondents. Letters should be addressed to "THE CHRONICLE, Enquiry Department, Montreal."

Answers will only be given to such communications as bear the writer's name, not for publication, but as evidence of good faith, and only to questions referring to matters of general interest in regard to which the Editor of Queries' Column will exercise his own discretion.

1473.—Widow, Woodstock, O.—Yes, the stock you mention pays a good dividend and is speculatively attractive. It is not a proper investment, however, for trust funds. In purchasing a stock far more than the dividend must be considered, earnings, equipment, management, etc., etc., all enter into the question of value. We would advise you to consult some good firm of stockbrokers before making any purchases.

1474.—I. G. A., Shawbridge, Q.—1. Notwithstanding the double liability clause, bank stock of the leading Canadian banks are looked upon as gilt edge investments. 2. No the whole authorized capital of the Richelieu & Ontario Navigation Company is not subscribed or paid up. The authorized capital is \$5,000,000. The paid-up capital \$3,132,000.

#### PROMINENT TOPICS.

THE STOCK TRANSFER TAX.—The stamp tax on transfers of securities is daily becoming more obnoxious. New difficulties in its working are constantly arising, some of them of serious import.

The longer it is imposed the more evident it becomes that this impost is highly injudicious as it discriminates against Montreal and has a tendency to drive business to other cities where no such tax is imposed. Such a tax is sure to obstruct the introduction of new capital into this province, as it taxes those transactions which arise out of, and are the necessary accompaniments of the organization of new industrial and financial enterprises. That the stamp tax is indirect in its nature we have shown on eminent legal authority.

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UNWISDOM OF THE TAX.—It seems very unwise on the part of the provincial authorities to impose a tax which is sure to be restrictive in connection with monetary transactions to the detriment of the province generally as well as to the special section of the community which it more directly affects.

The Stock Exchange is the medium for creating funds for establishing and maintaining enterprises of various descriptions and giving them a market value. Why then should the Stock Exchange be restricted and hampered in its operations by special taxation?

It seems like a discrimination against one section of the community, and taxes one class of business those interested in which bear their due share of all public burdens, and pay whatever civic or other taxes are imposed upon them just the same as those engaged in any other mercantile business, such as that of dry goods, groceries, produce, grain, hardware, or clothing, extending this remark further we may take in those engaged in the professions, such as lawyers, physicians and professors.

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A TAX MOST DIFFICULT TO JUSTIFY.—The stock transfer tax is certainly partial, restrictive, and discriminating. It involves intricacies which are liable to create almost insurmountable difficulties in carrying it into effect, intricacies which are liable to unreasonably hamper and delay all stock exchange transactions.

In addition to all the foregoing objections there is the question of legality.

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A SUGGESTION RE-TRANSFER STAMP-TAX.—In view of the doubt which has been expressed by those "learned in the law," as to the legality of this tax would it not be advisable for an arrangement to be made between the governing committee of the Stock Exchange and the Attorney General for this province to submit a test case to the courts, and, in the meantime, until a judgment is rendered, to suspend the imposition of the tax?