

not regulate commerce which has an international character and embraces another country. He was allowed ten days to prepare his defence. No doubt the plea urged is sound. The Grand Trunk is of course amenable to the interstate law for that part of its business which is done within the bounds of the Republic; but what it charges outside of these limits is a matter beyond the jurisdiction alike of the interstate commission and of Congress. Some means may of course be found of practically bringing Canadian railways which do an international business, within the scope of the law, but this will require further legislation. The present movement is probably intended to lay the foundation of such legislation, by establishing the existence of an apparent grievance from which American railways can be made to appear to be suffering.

Newfoundland is rejoicing in a plentiful seal harvest this year, the total catch being estimated at no less than 400,000. The steamer "Wolf" had a remarkable experience, having taken 28,000 seals in ten days, worth at least \$2 each. In one day she took on board 8,000. This implies new and advantageous methods, which are a great improvement on the old. On the "French shore," complaints are still made of French encroachments, and a motion on the subject is about to be made in the legislature. One complaint is that the French have set up lobster-canning establishments on the land; and this is held to be a sort of occupation which the treaty does not warrant. The Banks fishery is showing energy and enterprise, in sending out an increased number of vessels; instead of the 400 sent last year 600 will go this. The island required an infusion of new energy, and that which is now being put forth will not be exerted in vain.

OUR ATLANTIC PORTS.

Halifax and St. John are both on the look-out for the traffic which will be brought down by the C.P.R. when the Short Line Railway is completed. Halifax has been relying on promises which the principals now state in the Railway Committee are not obligatory and which will not be performed. In this state of the case, there is disappointment at Halifax. St. John meanwhile is pushing its claim to be made a port for the despatch of the Atlantic mails. Both ports have special advantages, and in time each may find what suits it best. The case as to distance is thus put by a special committee of the St. John Board of Trade:

Moville (Ireland) to Halifax 2,338 miles.
Moville to St. John 2,538 "
Moville to Portland, Me. 2,617 "

On these figures the committee remarks: "Taking into account the distance of railway travel between St. John and Halifax (276 miles) to reach St. John as a common centre of departure for the west, by way of the Short Line Railway, and the difference in the distance between St. John and Portland, Me. (about 80 miles), we think we are justified in claiming that St. John has the advantage."

Water distances and rail distances are not for all purposes, or perhaps any purpose, exact equivalents. The railway has the advantage in point of speed; the ocean has the advantage in point of cheapness for freight. This distinction naturally has the effect of giving the mails to the longest land route, while freight takes the shortest road to the ocean, as the most advantageous. When the C. P. R. refuses to continue the Short Line to Halifax, it says in effect that it can reach tide-water elsewhere than St. John, at less expense. This is what the company's refusal means, though it may mean something more; it may mean that it desires to see the continuation to Halifax built by another company. In that case, we suppose, it would not object to a choice of routes. It is difficult to see how, while rapidity of despatch is in its favor, Halifax can be deprived of the advantage of the Atlantic mail, whatever it may amount to. For the same reason, it will be a powerful competitor for the passenger traffic, though there is no reason why St. John should not get a fair share of this, provided the ocean steamers call there.

Something of course depends upon the relative character of the navigation. The committee has taken considerable pains to show that the navigation to St. John is perfectly safe. Vessels drawing 27½ feet of water have experienced no difficulty in St. John harbor. "The Bay of Fundy," the committee tells us, "from its mouth to St. John, is remarkably free, whether by the south or west channels;" and pilots find it easy to enter the port of St. John in bad weather. There are some fogs, it is admitted, but these do not delay vessels, at any season, and they do not average more than three hours and twenty minutes per day, and of course they do not occur with the regularity that any average would indicate. The danger of the navigation from this and all other causes is measurable by the losses. On sailing vessels this is .41 of 1 per cent. of the tonnage of vessels entered and cleared, while the percentage of loss of cargoes of steam vessels is .08 of 1 per cent. The percentage of loss on sailing and steam vessels is .26 of 1 per cent. These figures we should think will be considered satisfactory. The rate of insurance, another test, is said to be the same from St. John as from Halifax, Boston, and Portland.

The heavy tide in the harbor of St. John prevents ice forming there, and what escapes into the harbor from the river is not of a dangerous character. These are undoubtedly favorable circumstances which characterize the port for general purposes, and with the development of the railway system with which it is and will be brought into connection, they cannot fail to tell powerfully in its favor. And if it is not the most advantageously situated for mail traffic, the freight which it must attract will amply compensate it for the deprivation. The development of St. John can best be promoted by improving its natural advantages; it is to be congratulated on those that it possesses, and can afford to look without envy on rivals that have some one which it does not enjoy.

RETURNING GOODS.

Discussing the subject of "returns" to which we have recently given some attention, and which is especially dealt with in the circular quoted last week, a retailer asks how it is possible that a rigid rule can be laid down that no goods shall be taken back. "What is a man to do when he makes a mistake?" he asks. We can refer him to the letter of "Straight Business" in our columns to-day, or perhaps better, give him the advice of an American trade paper, which advises a merchant to understand his business, and so avoid mistakes: "The wide-awake merchant, who is sharp, never returns any goods, and what is the consequence? He is always welcome in every house from which he buys, and where there are favors to be shown he is the one who invariably receives them. When you go into his store you find live, active salesmen. Why are they live and active? Because their employer, when he makes a mistake in purchasing, does not return the goods wrongly bought. On the contrary, he says to his clerk, 'I have made a mistake, but these goods must be sold,' and they are sold." Precisely the view of our Montreal correspondent.

The American writer goes on to argue in this wise:—"The merchant who does not stand up to his contracts, but listens to the whims and caprices of every clerk in his employ, says: 'Well, if the goods will not sell, pack them up and return them.' If for no other reason than that of self-preservation, a merchant should stand by his contracts and also by his mistakes. The reason so many merchants do not succeed is because they are not willing to back up their judgment in the purchase of goods, and hence try to make the jobber father their sin in this respect. Fair square dealing pays all the time, and the merchant who does not think so abides in business only for a time."

LEATHER TRADE METHODS.

Over production, excessive credits, repeated compromises must demoralize any trade. Our correspondence columns show that the pressure of vicious methods is making itself felt in the leather and allied trades as well as in others. It seems clear that credit is too cheap, business overdone, and what small percentage of profit is made vanishes too often in bad debts. For some years the tanning business has been a precarious one. In a confidence that was either blind or fatuous, tanners kept on paying prices for raw material out of proportion to returns for their produce. Depreciation of values has been in operation for a long and tiresome period, too, and it was a cheerless profit outlook for the tanners. If on top of all this come losses by bad debts their hope is gone. Heart-sick from hope deferred, they now cry out for a general clearing up, for new and better methods of crediting.

The group of failures that have taken place among the inferior shoe manufacturer of Quebec lately has caused a demand for a change. We find a similar experi-