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CURRENCY CORRECTIONS.

It does seem strange that all these years importers have been converting Sterling into the obsolete Halifax Currency of four dollars to the pound, when they might have taken a short cut and used the methods on which Becher's Sterling Advance Tables are based. This little book is most concise in its treatment of the matter, and shows at a glance the cost of an article purchased in sterling from 3d. to 100 shillings, converted into dollars and cents, with the advance added in Dominion Currency at every 2½% up to 100% (including 33⅓% and 66⅔%). It is arranged with a separate table for each rate per cent., and is calculated upon the legal standard par of exchange, viz.: \$4.86.6 to the pound sterling.

No importer who has used the old method and the older book will fail to see the importance of this revision, and Becher's Sterling Advance Tables can be had at \$1.25 per copy from Morton Phillips & Co., Montreal, R. D. Richardson & Co., Winnipeg, and all booksellers.

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EMPLOYERS' LIABILITY ACT.

The discussion on Mr. McLaren's amendment relative to "contracting out" has occupied the House of Commons since Wednesday, and has led to an animated debate. It involved, as we said last week, a question of very great industrial importance—namely, whether workmen enjoying the benefits of existing insurance societies may, if they so choose, remain as they are, even if to do so they should contract out of the Act. There are not many of these societies, and that should render special treatment all the simpler. Among the chief are those of the London and North Western, which has three societies for different sections of their men, who number about 60,000; the London, Brighton and South Coast, with about 12,000 men; Sir W. G. Armstrong, Mitchell and Company, of Elswick, Newcastle-on-Tyne, with nearly 10,000 men; the South Metropolitan Gas Company, with about 3,000 men; and the Oldbury Alkali Company, Limited, of Birmingham, with nearly 1,000 men. In all these cases the employers largely subsidize the funds contributed by the men, but if the men come under the Act the contributions would de facto cease. Last year the London and North Western contributed £20,000 to the funds of their societies, and as showing the generosity of this as against any possible benefit the men would derive under law, it may be mentioned that in the case of the Midland Company with two-thirds as many men; the compensation paid has never exceeded £1,300 in any one year. Moreover, it is admitted that a great many men now get compensation from the mutual societies who would not get a penny from the Acts; relief is more steady, and the absence of litigation promotes good feeling between employer and employe. No wonder that 47,229 men of the London and North Western voted for contracting out as against 5,349 in favor of the bill. Some stress is laid on the fact that the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants is opposed to Mr. McLaren's amendment; but they number only 30,611 members, and even if they were unanimous on the point, which they are not, they would be completely overborne by the 72,000 men on the London and North Western and Brighton, who have already got something they like better, and are naturally anxious to retain it. We can only guess at the motives which can induce the trade societies to want the whole bill, and nothing but the bill. It is said that these mutual societies prevent the men joining trade unions, that they fetter the men's actions on industrial questions, and that they are contrary to the spirit of the times. We should take the latter any way as a recommendation. As we see it exhibited in coal strikes and the like, the least said about the spirit of the times the better.

The Government, with much show of principle, threw in its influence against Mr. McLaren, but with a prudence which reflects more credit on their cautiousness than on their courage, let it be known that they would not regard defeat as a mark of want of confidence. The elaborate and ingenious argument of the Home Secretary may be reduced to this, that contracting out would be dangerous in the hands of small employers, and that the enforced application of the Act would not have the effect of drying up the railway subscriptions. There is some force in the former, but exemption was not claimed for the small employer or for any one but the well-established societies specified. As for the second, can any one for a moment imagine that the London and North Western will lay itself

open to indefinite claims for legal damages and, at the same time, voluntarily give away £20,000 a year for the same purpose? As we write the issue of the debate is uncertain, but it is probable the "contracting out" clause will be lost. The House of Lords would, however, be fully justified in referring back the Bill on that ground.—*Herapath's Railway Journal.*

VICTORIA'S \$300 TAX.

Under the above heading the San Francisco *Coast Review* rebukes the short-sightedness of the Municipal Council of Victoria, B.C., in doing what other communities, not expected to be so intelligent, have long since seen the folly of, in laying unreasonable taxes on insurance companies. We quote:—

"The British Columbia Board of Fire Underwriters has presented a 'requisition' to the Victoria city council, respectfully petitioning the high-mightiness thereof for the repeal of the ridiculous \$300 tax on insurance companies. But the Canadian city councilman is a stiff-necked fool like his American fellow. The tax will remain. Alderman Henderson 'voiced' the majority when he said: 'The companies won't leave Victoria. They are charging us high rates and have a right to pay the tax.' The requisition, signed by nearly all the Canadian managers, recommends that Victoria rates be advanced 25 per cent., and that the advance be maintained until the tax is abolished. This is certainly the right course for the companies to pursue. The insured will then discover that this tax was levied in the interest of the owners of unimproved property, since the owners of improved property must pay the tax. For the entertainment of our English exchanges we quote from the proceedings of this learned council: 'Mayor—I will not sit here and be insulted. You must take that language back. Alderman—I am not going to sit here and see you prostitute your position. Mayor—I'll make you keep order. Alderman—Keep order yourself. Mayor—Don't you talk to me that way. Alderman—You can't shut me up.' These are the gentlemen who are trying to extort \$300 from every insurance company represented in Victoria."

INSURANCE AND THE TOWN.

The recent fire suggests a consideration which ought, in our opinion, to have been long ago entertained. We have been informed that some of those buildings paid as high as 9 per cent. The lowest rated paid 6. Now the rule to have brick buildings will reduce the rate of insurance within the area to which it applies, but we would point out this, that the rate may be still further reduced by having proper fire protection. The council has very properly bought a steam fire engine, but we think the fire protection, as well as other ends, might be greatly subserved by a scheme to bring water from Boggy Creek into the town. The amount that would be saved in insurance rates and doctors' bills, capitalized, would pay for the works. The credit of the town is good and we ought to be able to borrow money at a low rate of interest. We do not know what they would cost, but let us suppose they would cost \$50,000. Six per cent. on this sum would be only \$3,000 a year. Now suppose that every insurer in town would have only 25 per cent. thrown off the premiums he has to pay, it would certainly make an amount of money that would go far towards paying the interest we speak of, if not cover it. And then look at the collateral advantages of which we do not want to speak just now—better water, a fuller supply for drainage, and more salubrious hygiene.—*Regina Leader.*