

hides, etc., carried on a large banking business. Of the subscribed capital of £4,500,000, only £450,000 had been paid up. During the five years of its existence, the company paid 10 per cent. to the shareholders, except for the year ending March 31st, 1892, when the dividend was 8 per cent. The deficiency is now stated at £250,000 to £300,000. With so large an amount of uncalled capital, this resource ought to prove amply sufficient; but the directors do not desire to rely wholly upon it, preferring schemes of reconstruction, which would compel creditors to become holders of debenture stock or submit to some other alternative as little likely to be acceptable. The fact that the managers are Australians and many of the creditors Englishmen, may add to the natural difficulty of any plan of reconstruction.

THE INDIAN CURRENCY EXPERIMENT.

A deficiency of revenue, caused by the fall of exchange and the difficulty of filling the deficit by new taxes, furnished the motive for the recent change in the currency of India. The change was hastened by the prospect of the repeal of the Sherman silver purchase law in the United States, and a consequent further decline of silver and of exchange. The stoppage of the free coinage of silver on private account is expected to contract the silver currency, and thereby enhance the price. In fixing the ratio between silver and gold at 1s. 6d. per rupee, the government rated silver beyond its bullion value, a discrepancy which would be of no account in a country where silver is merely used as change, but it is a very different thing in India, where silver is the chief currency and is payable in unlimited amounts. The stoppage of free coinage of silver on private account is relied upon to diminish the amount. But the overvaluing of the rupee, it is well understood, may have the effect of bringing back the rupees that have gone to other countries, though it is hoped that the addition to the silver currency from this source will be only temporary. The Government has since found itself under obligation to accept the silver of the exchange banks; and if it should coin this metal on its own account, instead of doing it for the banks, where will be the difference as regards the quantity of coined silver?

A measure which has for its object the diminution of the quantity of coined silver, is a step in the right direction, and it embodies a policy which is in direct opposition to that of the Sherman silver purchase law. Under that law, coined silver was increased largely in quantity. The fact of purchasing silver with gold was relied on to keep up the price of silver. Never did an experiment fail more completely to fulfil its purpose. The effect of the increase of the silver coinage was not taken into account; though it ought to have been foreseen that if silver was produced in excess of the demand, the price must go down. The silver and the gold parted company in the open market, while maintaining a parity in the coined metals. This only showed that the

crisis when the two coined metals must cease to hold companionship on equal terms had not yet come.

If the Government of India can decrease the quantity of legal tender silver coin, its object of raising the value will be attained. The fixing of the price of silver in the par of exchange at an arbitrary figure, not following a natural law, cannot certainly be relied on fully to serve the purpose intended. But it can be reinforced by a diminution of the silver coin, and the end aimed at may be attained.

BUYING IN PERSON IN CITY MARKETS.

In bygone days the commercial traveller has been invaluable. He is of great service still in some ways and in some places. But it is possible to have too many of him, and, as a matter of fact, there are too many of him. The sensible, qualified, experienced travelling salesman is a valuable man. But this sort of traveller, there is reason to think, is in the minority. We believe in the importance of a personal attendance upon the wholesale markets. A visit to the city, which once involved the expenditure of a considerable sum of money and the loss of many valuable days, is now, in three cases out of four, but the matter of a few dollars and the loss of but little time. And these losses are, we believe, more than made up by the advantages which they secure.

When once in the wholesale centre, the buyer has before him not one house dealing in a general way in all the goods which he desires to purchase, but a number of houses, each doing a special trade in different lines. Thus, while it may pay him to buy his staples from one house, it will, in all probability, be equally to his advantage to buy, say, house furnishings from another house. One firm may make a specialty of imported goods, another deal in those of home manufacture. Or while one house handles boots and shoes of an ordinary class, another may deal only in fine foot wear. Thus the country merchant is able to obtain at the right prices those goods which, in his judgment, will best suit the needs or tastes of his customers.

The retail dealer has, too, in visiting the markets, an opportunity of making the personal acquaintance of the wholesale merchant. The full value of this is only understood by those who, when in anxiety or difficulty, have found a powerful friend just where one was most needed among his creditors. The wholesale dealer, on his side, is glad of the chance to personally meet his customer. For he is then enabled to "size up" his man, learn the capabilities and resources of the person with whom he is dealing, and at the same time save the expenses connected with a traveller's visit.

To the above advantages we would add others, which, although derived indirectly, are none the less effective and important. The number of visits made to the market during the year must of course depend entirely upon matters of local and individual consequence, such as the merchant's distance from the city, the nature of his trade,

and the amount of his yearly turnover. They should be made at least once a season; if oftener than this be impossible, we would by no means advise a regulation of purchases by the number of visits. However, after an inspection of the stocks held by the various houses has been once made, the retailer can make additions to his first purchases with almost equal expediency and advantage when in the city; it will also be found that the country merchant may pick up many ideas by visiting the large retail stores and observing their window dressings, the display of goods and general store arrangement.

In discussing this system of buying, we have found objections advanced by merchants such as these: All clerks cannot be trusted in the absence of their employers; customers like to see the merchant himself in attendance upon business; the storekeeper, as a rule, has much more confidence when buying in his own shop, surrounded by his stock, than when he is in the city, surrounded by the immense stocks of the wholesale houses. These objectors may be reminded that a staff of clerks who cannot of themselves carry on a business for two or three days are scarcely worthy of employment. It is very true that customers like to see the proprietor of the store at his place of business. But they are equally well pleased to learn from the clerk, or to read in their local paper, that Mr. Smith or Mr. Brown is in Toronto, or Montreal, or Hamilton, "making a selection of the latest styles in the season's goods, and proposes by close and skilful buying to give an advantage to his customers." The last objection raised we may hope needs but little refutation. Surely our merchants have learned enough of business ways to induce them to inspect their stock, find out just what and how much they need, put it down in a book, and then in buying, guided by this book, keep well within this margin. And we are sure that the salesman, in the wholesale house, will be no more inclined to overload his customer than would the traveller, if as much. It is equally to the advantage of both parties that purchases be moderate and selected often and with care. For it is indisputable that the successful merchant owes as much to judicious buying as to skilful selling, if not more.

BRINGING TAX EVADERS TO BOOK.

The extent to which the taxation of personal estate is evaded is a well-worn theme. The different States of the American Union show no disposition to abandon the task of taxing of personalty, on account of the difficulty of the operation. On the contrary, they are making the laws for the collection of taxes on personalty more stringent, and some of them are succeeding in adding largely to the taxes from this source. Massachusetts discredits the idea that taxes on personalty cannot be collected. In that State the assessed value of personalty is nearly one-third as much as that of real estate, \$213,695,829 against \$680,279,875. And the personal property of the great manufacturing corporations, except machinery, is exempt. In New York,