sells it in the leaf, whether rolled or twisted, he must make a return to the revenue officers, and must pay 10 cents per pound duty, and if he cuts it up, 20 cents per pound. This law, which was intended to allow the French Canadians to grow for their own use, the *tabac role* and *tabac en torquette, i.e.* leaf tobacco loosely rolled or twisted, of a common quality to which they were accustomed, is condemned as faulty. It certainly has been evaded; and has become so nearly a dead letter that, while according to the census of 1871, it appears that 1,200,000 lbs. of tobacco were grown in Quebec, but 55,000 lbs. were returned for duty. This illicit growth has increased, until it was estimated in 1876, by the Tobacco Association of Canada, which published a pamphlet on the grievance, that between four and five millions of pounds per annum were grown, the quantity paying duty was, however, in 1872–3, 24,000 lbs.; in 1873–4, 1,700 lbs.; and in 1874-5 but *ten* pounds.

If this were found by the Government to be a needless or a bad law, or if its desuetude wrought no injustice, one might not quarrel with the attitude of the Government with respect to it, who while contending strenuously that its retention was needful or revenue purposes, permit it to be broken for the purpose, as has been openly alleged, of influencing French Canadians favorably. And that not alone the present administration can be thus blamed, is shown by the figures we have quoted for 1871-2 and 1872-3. But injustice has been done to the manufacturers of cut tobacco. A few years ago, there were twelve of these factories in Canada worked by steam, and a number of smaller establishments; now, we are told, the smaller ones are no more, and of the larger there are but two or three, which are expiring in the effort to compete with an article which is currently sold at a price below the bare amount of the duty.

The effect of this state of things in Quebec, which is the principal market for the home-grown article, has been to reduce the amount returned for duty in Ontario from 245,000 lbs. in 1871-2 to 23,000 lbs. in 1874-5, 984 lbs. in 1876, and to *four* pounds in 1877. We gather from the statistics for 1877 of Inland Revenue, that the quantity of Canadian leaf taken for consumption last fiscal year was but 8,630 lbs, while three years ago it was 113,797 lbs., and the annual average for four previous years was 60,416 lbs. "Yet," comments the Commissioner, "the information which comes to the department, from various sources, justifies the belief that there has been a steady increase in the quantity cultivated; and the number of seizures of such tobacco illegally offered for sale, indicates a wide-spread determination on the part of the cultivators to evade the duty."

The view of the tobacco manufacturers is, that, were the present law enforced, or rather so freed from its vagueness of language that its spirit could be acted upon, the farmers of Quebec might grow their cheap tobacco for family use, unmolested, and yet derive a good return from such as they chose to sell after paying the duty. The cut-smoking industry was once a considerable one, and might be so again. Their proposal is, that any one wishing to grow tobacco, shall be compelled, under penalty, to request a license to grow it, and shall make, at stated times, sworn returns of the amount he has produced, being allowed fifty pounds per annum for his personal use. This, they think, would increase the revenue by half a million dollars. If this be not done, they would have the present law abolished, and tobacco-growing made free.

CREDITORS' ASSIGNEES.

Government appointments are not always wise or well chosen. Too often, party considerations are allowed to outweigh questions of efficiency and trustworthiness. Official assignees are not all above suspicion any more than other public servants. Many and grievous have been the charges of extravagance and delay preferred against them by disappointed creditors. It is to be remembered, however, that theirs is no easy task. The affairs of the majority of concerns that fall into their hands are in anything but a satisfactory shape when put into liquidation. Encumbered assets, doubtful rights, disputed liabilities, incapacity, bad book-keeping, and often dishonesty on the part of the trading firm or company, make the difficulties which they have to combat anything but slight. One constant ground of complaint on the part of local assignees is that whenever there is an estate that is worth looking after they are supplanted by assignees appointed by creditors. It is a well known fact, that there are many persons, not official assignees, who make the winding up of insolvent estates their business. Some of these gentlemen are no doubt most efficient officers and merit well the public confidence they court so zealously. But there are cases where their superiority to regular assignees is by no means evident, and not unfrequently creditors yield to the importunities of would-be assignees to their own hurt.

There are many reasons why, other things being equal, local assignees can wind up estates more advantageously than outside men, not least among which is the question of expense—a most material consideration in all cases. The local knowledge that they may fairly be assumed to possess should stand them in good stead in their dealing with real estate, boos debts and in fact with all or nearly all classek of assets. Add to this the fact that their time is not largely taken up, as in the case of their rivals, in running after other estates and travelling over all the country to attend meetings; and the considerations that should sway creditors in favor of local men will seem far from inconsiderable whether in number or cogency.

To state the case fairly, however, it must be admitted that there are circumstances which militate with greater or less force against the local men. Those outsiders who deal in such matters are usually accountants—men whose business training pre-eminently fits them for the duties of an assignee. Local assignees on the other hand generally make this business simply an adjunct to something else, not necessarily of such a character as to school them for their duties of office. To which it may be answered that they are compelled to a large extent by the practice of constantly supplanting them, to resort to some additional means of earning a livelihood. Again, where the mass of creditors are in Toronto, Montreal, Hamilton or other cities as the case may be, it is often convenient to have the assignee resident in the city, as it enables creditors to attend the meetings in person, and to give some personal supervision to the winding up of the estate. For we are sorry to have to add, that there are some official assignees whose management of estates is notoriously unsatisfactory.

Notwithstanding all these things, we are persuaded that the practice of changing the assignee is becoming much too common, especially in small estates. In these cases the question of the increased expense is always a most serious one, though where assets are large that consideration is not so overpowering. Of course it is true that local men who manage their business well must and will win public confidence in time. But it is equally true that confidence reposed in them is a strong incentive to a faithful discharge of their duties; while constant attempts to supersede them is calculated to encourage the grasping desire to make as much as possible out of estates while in their hands. We think local assignees are entitled to more consideration in this respect than has of late been accorded to them, and we believe that a change in the direction indicated would be beneficial to all concerned—excepting of course the public "accountants and assignees" whose business would thereby be decreased.

The paramount consideration must ever be the interests of creditors; and we believe that in the vast majority of cases their interest would be best and most satisfactorily subserved by allowing estates to remain under the control and management of the regular legal custodians, who in addition to the advantages already pointed out, have further in their favor that they have given substantial security for the due performance of their duties. True, creditors may require security from an assignee of their own appointing, but this provision is practically a dead letter, for such appointments are made only as a general rule when the proposed new