

In its present stage, the sealing question, taken alone, is scarcely a subject for negotiation. What is now to be given is the evidence of experts to establish the facts, on which it seems there is a difference of statement between the representatives of Canada and the United States. When the facts have been proved, the mists that now represent an alleged danger of the destruction of the seal herds, will be less dense. It is quite possible that some of the contentious matter may survive in the form of a difference as to the number of female seals killed and of those that survive. If the danger of the destruction of the herds has been exaggerated, or is in fact non-existent, sealing at sea will be found not to be responsible for the mischief which it suits Americans to charge against it. We read in the American press of a scheme for buying out the rights of the Canadian sealers; no such statements are made on this side, and we cannot believe that any one here suggested it. In any case, it is difficult to see how Canadians of this generation could sell the common sea rights of future generations.

It looks as if the Canadian envoys to Washington would proceed, in their negotiation with the American Government, in a wholly informal way. So much uncertainty exists as to the disposition of Americans to make or receive overtures for a settlement of existing difficulties, that this is, perhaps, a wise precaution. Among the subjects to be talked over, Commercial Reciprocity would naturally find a place. The State Department, at Washington, is alleged to have intimated, during the last week, that it is prepared to discuss this question with Canada. Considering the past treatment of reciprocity by the Washington authorities, it would be necessary that the resumption of any negotiations should come from them. Commercial Union is a dream which no one now regards as realizable in actual life, whatever spell it may have cast over some minds in the past. Once it was a bar to a form of reciprocity which was, and may still be capable of being realized. On this subject, the past forbids Canada to be sanguine, though we need not despair of something being done.

According to the statements made, on what appears to be reliable authority, the Canadian delegates to Washington do not intend to offer a reciprocity more extensive, or on any other foundation, than is contained in the preferential trade legislation of last session. The offer there held out is general, and any nation can, by accepting the condition on which it is based, share the preference. The principles of the British tariff brought Great Britain within the circle of the preference. The tariffs of some other countries were found, on examination, to entitle these countries to the same privilege. The form of reciprocity offered by Canada does not differ essentially from that offered to all the world by the United States. This fact should make it all the more easy to arrive at a favorable conclusion. The offers made by the two countries have to be adjusted, so as to bring them to the equivalent of a common term, and the thing will be done, if done at all. So much for the general principle. Beyond this, it is conceivable that proposals may be made, on one side or the other, for the admission, duty free, of specific articles, the produce of either country. In this case it will be necessary to deal strictly on the principle of equivalents. If the list of articles proposed to be so dealt with were long, it would be necessary to guard against exclusive preference; but if it were confined to a few articles, and those not such as England is specially interested in, it would not much matter what form the prefer-

ence took. Any adverse discrimination that would touch England in a vital spot, will, of course, not be thought of: on this point the honor of the Government and of Canada is, by the most solemn pledges, made through the organ of its Prime Minister, sacredly engaged.

INSOLVENCY LEGISLATION.

There are signs of restiveness among the merchants and manufacturers of Canada at the unsatisfactory state of the various laws of different Provinces with respect to the handling of the estates of bankrupt debtors. And the commercial sentiment in favor of a general insolvency law for the Dominion is growing stronger day by day. Nor can it be wondered at. Suppose a man, say in Quebec or Ontario, who has credited a trader in Nova Scotia for \$1,000 worth of goods, and finds that trader making an assignment to some Bluenose friend, and giving preferences to local creditors, which reduce the dividend to outside creditors to thirty or forty cents in the dollar. And they may have to sign a discharge to get even that dividend. In Ontario itself, the state of things is unsatisfactory. Let alone the fact that a creditor may make a private arrangement with a debtor that will virtually shut out the claims of everybody else, it is also the case that a man may lay a plan to swindle a creditor, and the creditor may know it, but is unable to help himself by either criminal or civil proceedings. Naturally, a wholesale dealer so treated wants to see some law passed that will guarantee him equality in ranking with other creditors in such a case. And there are numbers of merchants and manufacturers smarting under this kind of inequality. Not only is this the case here, European merchants have the same fault to find. And not only have British journals had much to say about the injustice of these conflicting laws of different Canadian Provinces, but meetings of merchants and trade guilds in the Old Country have remonstrated in high places about them.

It is not to be denied, however, that there are great difficulties in framing a satisfactory insolvency measure. Nor can we forget that the Act which was abrogated with opprobrium in 1880, which had been carefully drawn and once, if not twice, amended, was far from giving satisfaction in its working. And the various efforts made since, in the Curran bill, introduced in 1883 and again in 1892, the measure prepared by Mr. Edgar for the relief of insolvent debtors brought in in 1886, and the carefully prepared bill of Sir Mackenzie Bowell two years ago, have all failed to secure parliamentary approval. But the pressure for an insolvency law is increasing and will demand a response.

PRESERVE THE WOODLANDS.

The woodlands of Ontario have been sadly depleted. In the counties of Wentworth, Dufferin and Huron the proportion of woodland to the total area is but ten per cent.; in Prince Edward and Lambton it is nine per cent.; in Wellington and Brant, eight per cent.; Peel and York, seven per cent., and in Victoria only five per cent. These figures are not the estimates of a careless or merely local investigator, but are based upon the returns made to the Ontario Government. The latest returns show that, taking the province as a whole, less than twenty-five per cent. of the total area is under timber. This average is low enough, lower indeed than is easily credible, but becomes more unsatisfactory when we take into account that in it is included vast tracts of wooded land in Northern Ontario, which are not now used for agricultural purposes. This