

With a high tariff on precious stones, necessitating high prices in this country, and the facilities with which they can be concealed, many tourists would buy goods of this class in Europe, trusting to their adroitness to evade the customs officers on this side of the ocean. In consequence, the traffic in precious stones would be transferred from this country to Europe, and the men and capital now employed here in importing them and preparing them for the market would be left idle.

5th. The jewelry trade in general suffers greatly from the illicit traffic in jewelry carried on along the Canadian border. Should the duty on precious stones be advanced as proposed, this evil would be greatly aggravated, involving the Government in much expense to increase and maintain its customs service on the northern border of the United States.

6th. Under the present duty the temptation for smuggling is not sufficient to defeat the honest purposes of reputable importers and merchants, but we firmly believe that any increase above ten per cent. *ad valorem* would have a tendency to promote smuggling, and to destroy an industry from which the Government now derives a considerable revenue.

#### THE RAILWAY COMMISSION.

From present appearances it seems doubtful whether in the near future the railways won't control this country, instead of the country controlling its railways. The indications now point with certainty to the fact that ere long the traffic of Canada will be at the mercy of two railway corporations, viz., the "Grand Trunk" and "Canada Pacific," and it depends entirely upon the jealousy of these competitors whether the public are to be fairly served or not. Corporations are said to be soulless, and these are not exceptions to the rule, as any one may judge from the past record, either of the Grand Trunk or the Canada Pacific. They have each bled the public in two ways—one by getting all they could in subsidies, and then by discriminating against them in freight and passenger rates, in favor of United States through freight and passengers, who never contributed one cent to their construction or maintenance.

We have often before pointed out the fact that these railroads are like huge vampires, slowly sucking the life-blood of this country's commerce. They charge to the extreme limit the law allows, and in many cases go beyond it, and the sufferers from their legalized tyranny have no chance of redress. It is absurd that

in this age of perfected railway travel with the cost of construction and maintenance reduced to almost one-half of its former price, that freight and passenger rates should still be kept up to the old-time figures. These railways still charge three cents per mile for carrying passengers, while better companies can carry them at two cents per mile and make it pay. Even this rate is sometimes exceeded where they have the chance to do it. That these rates are exorbitant is proved not only by the fact that other roads, such as the New York Central, can regularly carry passengers at one-third less and make it pay; but that these very roads themselves can and do at times carry passengers for less than one cent per mile and make money out of it.

We also fail to see why if any reduction in rates is to be made, they should not be given to the Canadian taxpayer who helped to build the road, equally with the American citizen across the lines, who simply pays for the services they render him.

There cannot be a shadow of a doubt in any impartial mind that the citizens of Canada are not at present, nor have they in the past, received fair treatment from the railway powers that be. We hail, therefore, with more than ordinary satisfaction, Mr. Dalton McCarthy's bill, at present before the House of Commons, proposing to appoint a Railway Commission composed of three persons, who shall in themselves form a Court of Appeal in all matters of railway abuse, and have the power of enforcing any decision they may arrive at, concerning any complaints brought to their notice. Great Britain has such a commission, which has been found to work well, owing probably to the fact that they have appointed capable and independent men to carry it out. We trust if this bill, now before the House, becomes law, that we shall also secure competent men for the position; if not, and some political trickster is appointed, we may find ourselves in a worse position than we at present occupy. Mr. McCarthy in his speech upon it, referring to the *personelle* of the commission, said, one should be an experienced railway man, another a lawyer, and the third a man of common sense. We trust that they may all have the latter qualification in a large degree, and what is equally important, have independence enough to refuse to truckle to wealthy corporations, because they are able to accord them privileges that cannot be given by the public.

#### Selected Matter.

##### COMMERCIAL LEGISLATION.

The opening of the Parliamentary session, *minus* the prospect of exceptional special measures in the Ministerial programme, affords ground for hoping that our legislators may be enabled to pass enactments which have long been anxiously expected by the commercial and trading classes of the country. Some of these measures have been before the public for an unconscionably long time, but have not, as yet, had a fair chance of reaching the stage of fruition, for reasons which need not be specially mentioned here. The Queen's Speech, read on Thursday, promises us several Bills, which affect mercantile matters, amongst them being those "for the amendment and consolidation of the laws relating to bankruptcy and patents," for the reform of local and Metropolitan government, for the conservancy of rivers and the prevention of floods. Of these, the most important is unquestionably the Bankruptcy Bill, piloted by Mr. Chamberlain, with the outlines of which the public have already become acquainted. Certain modifications and changes, however, have been introduced since the matter was last before the House of Commons. Assuming that these alterations are in the direction commonly reported, the Bill will, doubtless, command approval, and will, we hope, become law at no distant date. It is understood that a public examination of all bankrupts will be provided for; that an official receiver will be attached to each court to report upon every failure, who will also wind up such estates as the creditors may desire, particularly in suspensions for small amounts; that the discharge of the bankrupt will not be the formality or matter of "arrangement" it now is, but will depend upon the nature of the official receiver's report; that the creditors may themselves deal with the estate if they think fit; that trustees shall not retain the large sums often in their possession, but shall bank them separately and at once; that the accounts of trustees shall be regularly audited, and that their remuneration shall be on a fixed scale; and that all costs shall be duly taxed before the bills are paid. The appointment of trustees will necessarily be a point requiring careful