

the beginning of the shipping season, and had there been no suitable cold storage plant in Montreal to receive the goods from country districts, the loss would have run into millions of dollars.

Reviewing the whole circumstances of the trial, and having regard also to what has been effected in the reorganization of the Cold Storage Company during several months past, it seems to us that the course pursued by the Merchants' Bank of Halifax, so far from being a purely selfish and immoral one, was a wise one for the community. If the bank, acting on the first impulse of indignation, had set the machinery of law at work, wrecked the company and stopped its plant, the result would have been loss to itself and many more creditors. Whereas, if we are correctly informed, no tenant of the company has suffered, its creditors are paid in full, the direction has been re-formed, and the only pecuniary sufferers are the shareholders, who appear to have contributed to the frauds by their neglect, and one of whom, the vice-president, signed the bogus receipts in blank. This result, achieved we may be sure not without great trouble and expense, may fairly be weighed against the contention, theoretically correct, that the bank should, *coute qui coute*, have taken all risks and instantly prosecuted.

LIFE ASSURANCE CANVASSING.

When a man agrees to take out either a fire or a life policy of assurance, his duty to himself requires that he shall see that he gets what he is paying for. A shrewd business man will generally do this. But all people are not shrewd; many are ignorant and unsuspecting, and of all institutions in the world a life insurance company should be the last to take improper advantage of ignorance or even credulity in its clients. In the case of Caldwell Meyer, arrested last week at the instance of Mr. John McLaren, of Brockville, for obtaining a promissory note of the latter for some \$3,500, fraudulent misrepresentation, Mr. McLaren declares, we understand, that the policy he got was not the policy he gave his note for, but a much less favorable one. Whether this is the case or not will come out at the trial. But we are told that other persons, who took policies through Meyer, have similar cause of complaint against him, though they have forborne to take the same course as Mr. McLaren. The present is not the first time that glib-tongued and unscrupulous life agents have come over here and written large sums on Canadian lives. But so good a company as the New York Life cannot afford to have such men in its employ, however clever they may be. The public memory for "chain-lightning" insurance canvassers of the Meyer sort, is long, and justly so. And the public will, quite properly, unless he is disavowed, hold the company, which employs such a man, responsible for the stories he tells.

—If some of the complaints made of heavy personal taxes were established by proof, they would go far to show that they were unconstitutional. A municipal tax must be direct, that is of such a nature that the person who advances it cannot get it back from those with whom he does business. But judicial proof of the fact of recovery of the tax advanced would

be difficult. Some years ago, the Privy Council decided that a tax levied upon insurance was valid, because the assumption was, it was too small to be got back by an increase of premiums. This implies that a tax might be so high that the person who advances it would be obliged to recover it from his customers, in which case it would become an indirect tax and the levy would be illegal, under our written constitution. Against such a contingency municipalities have a clear interest in guarding. In the present contest, before the Commission, the municipalities are rather on the defensive than in an aggressive attitude. All parties are obliged to seem to seek an equitable arrangement; though their contrariety of views discloses marked differences in their conceptions of equity. Conscience is generally obliging enough to square with the interest of the witness.

OUR AUSTRALIAN LETTER.

Business is quieter in New South Wales. The harvest prospects are poorer than a fortnight ago for lack of rain, and wool is still low in price, though late Sydney sales show the market to be firmer. The Queensland outlook is still poor, wool 70,000 bales, and sugar 60,000 tons short of last year. The other colonies are in much better shape, and report business good.

Another matter interfering with trade already is the preparation for receiving the Governor-General of Australia, and proclaiming the Commonwealth on the 1st of January. It is considered to be a first-class opportunity to advertise Sydney, and that city proposes to make the most of it. A most extensive programme was proposed, which included visits from representatives of the Cabinet, and troops of Great Britain, India and Canada and other colonies. England cannot spare a Minister, but is sending a thousand troops, composed of quotas from all arms of the service; India, after at first refusing, has agreed to send a hundred men, types of the native force, and New Zealand is sending a troop of cavalry. Canada is yet to be heard from, and it is hoped that it will be in the affirmative. Sir Wilfrid Laurier, who from the part he took in the Jubilee functions, is pretty well known here, would be specially welcomed.

Unluckily, at the outset, the mayor of the city and the Premier of the Colony came into a bit of collision as to the parts which the city and the Government (in reality their own persons), should play in the demonstrations. Each desires to be the first to welcome the Governor. The Premier, who on such a point can be pretty determined, will win. He thinks it may be a useful card in the game which it is alleged he is playing, the stake being the first Premiership of Australia. He is a protectionist, as is Barton, who, as the consistent advocate of Federation, is expected to secure the honor. Indeed, it is supposed, he virtually has it. Just now he is keeping quiet, and when he speaks devotes himself to platitudes. He seems to be successfully developing a talent for talking long and saying little.

On the other hand his ablest opponent, Mr. Reid, the late Premier of this Colony, whose position was somewhat in doubt, has taken the field as the champion of free trade. He talks the latter doctrine, but in practice says it is impossible at present, and so he supports a revenue tariff. He has had enormous meetings in Adelaide and Melbourne, protectionist centres. His speeches, especially if continued, will certainly have the effect of moderating the fiscal policy of the Commonwealth, though not likely to win. The fiscal contest is likely to break up the old party lines. In Victoria the Liberal party is protectionist, and the Conservative free trade. In New South Wales it is the reverse. In Victoria the labor party has strongly supported protection, in New South Wales, by a majority of one, the caucus declared for the opposite policy. And so it is in the other colonies. One blessing will come out of the fight. It will prevent provincialism which threatened to be the chief danger to the Commonwealth.

I notice that at a dinner in Toronto a speaker urged the